3 1223 00412 0326
SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

BOOK NO. B M976M | ACCESSION 360474

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY
VITA SINE LITERIS MORS EST

FORM 3431 30M-10-41

DATE DUE

SFPL JUL 6 - '81			
JUL 24 1981			
SFPL AUG 14 '81			
SFPL OCT 26 '89			
SFPL OCT 26 '89			
SFPL NOV 3 '91			
SFPL AUG - 4 '92			

DEMCO 38-297

THE BIOGRAPHY

OF

ALFRED DE MUSSET.

Translated from the French of Paul de Musset

BY

HARRIET W. PRESTON,

AUTHOR OF "TROUBADOURS AND TROUVÈRES," ETC.; AND TRANSLATOR OF MISTRAL'S "MIRÈIO."

ALDEN LIBRARY

BOSTON:

ROBERTS BROTHERS.

1877.

Copyright, 1877,
By Roberts Brothers.

B
M976m
360474

Cambridge:
Press of John Wilson & Son.

PREFACE.

THE memoir of Alfred de Musset by his devoted brother Paul is, in many respects, a model of what a biography ought not to be. It is an ardent and tearful defence, a eulogy, a threnody, a picturesque and highly idealized sketch: it is any thing, in short, but a sober and truthful piece of portraiture. But who would care to read a brother's memorial of a life so brief and troubled, a nature so richly endowed, and in many ways so winning, if it were dispassionate? The whole of the sad truth concerning the dissipations which wrecked the poet's health, and the waywardness and weakness which paralyzed his exquisite talent, years even before he passed away, may be read elsewhere. In particular, the study or series of studies by Paul Lindau, published in Berlin almost simultaneously with the present memoir, contains a great deal of sound criticism, and is quite remarkable for its lack of reserve in details. But the eager plea of M. Paul de Musset deceives as

little as eager pleas usually do. We divine all that he avoids saying, at the same time that we like him the better for his chivalrous care of his brother's reputation.

The task of rendering into English his graphic and simple narrative has been a very pleasant one; and, for an explanation of its few obscure allusions to matters connected with French literature and politics, I am indebted to my friend, Mme. George Harney, of Cambridge.

HARRIET W. PRESTON.

YORK, September 3, 1877.

THE BIOGRAPHY

OF

ALFRED DE MUSSET.

I HAVE long cherished the purpose of giving to the admirers of Alfred de Musset the story of his life. I have often felt moved to begin the task, but have been withheld by the very vividness of my recollections. And yet it is no mere duty which I propose to fulfil toward the man whom, of all men, I have best loved, and whose most loyal friend and recipient of confidence I have ever been. I regard it rather as a complement needful to the perfect understanding of his work. For his work is himself; and in it we perceive that daily transmutation of genius which belongs only to those privileged poets in whom the imagination is in constant communion with the heart. The creations of these rare minds, their merest fancies, do not usually wear the aspect of fiction for the reason that they reveal the very workings of the poet's soul. Their history becomes the history of the human heart, and nothing can be uninteresting which makes them better known. This it is which renders the curiosity of the public, about the incidents of their lives, legitimate and intelligent.

Not only did Alfred de Musset receive the gift of keen feeling and forceful expression, but the sentiments and the thoughts to which he gave so fair a form were those of a whole generation. I know not if any other poet could be cited as being the poet of his era so thoroughly as was he. The first readers of "Rolla" and the "Nuit de Mai" may possibly have seen therein only a philosophic thesis, the doubts of an unquiet mind, the plaints of an unhappy lover; but ultimately men recognized, even there, the truthful expression of universal feelings. What the poet suffered, he suffered in common with all his contemporaries; and this is why his works were read in attics as well as in castles, and why his verses charmed the tedium of the bivouac on the remote frontiers of Kalybia.

It has often been said that the poetry of sentiment makes the envied possessor of this form of expression unhappy. Sensitive souls are sent into the world to be crowded and crushed. The loss of a mistress, the defection of a friend, a disappointed hope, an illusion dispelled, — all the ills, great and small, of which life is made up, — exasperate them, and would drive them to desire death if they could not find a solace for their woes in the poet's inspiration. So that those who afford us our highest intellectual pleasures and our sweetest consolations appear doomed to weariness and melancholy, even when they are not actually molested and tormented, as too often happens; and if their best friends sometimes irritate them unintentionally, how many others wound them on purpose, well knowing that a pin-prick will make them bleed. The biography

which follows will not merely furnish an additional proof of these undeniable truths: it will help to establish another not quite so hackneyed; namely, that sorrow makes great poets, as Alfred de Musset himself has said in the "Nuit de Mai."

Is it not plain that we owe the finest passages in the "Divine Comedy" to the bitterness of the exile, and to Dante's resentment against the injustice of his fellow-citizens? The "Misanthrope" of Molière might never have seen the light if Armande Béjart had been a virtuous and faithful wife. Happy is the poet who, like Petrarch, finds an inexhaustible source of sorrow and sensibility in the virtue of a gentle and compassionate woman!

Like his predecessors, Alfred de Musset drew from love and from grief his finest inspiration. A secret instinct forewarned him of those dangerous fellow-beings who were destined to put his affections to their hardest tests. But he had no need to go in search of suffering. Rather, it sought him out so often that his sensibilities were never allowed to sleep. Every one seemed to contribute something to the sum of his sorrows; and thus it is that the evil and invidious defeat their own end by rendering the poet's renown yet costlier, and more difficult for him to obtain.

If Alfred de Musset had been born in the age of Louis XIV., he would, of course, have belonged to the court, and shared the intimacy of the king. He would have enjoyed the privileges then reserved for nobility and genius; he would have held some important charge and been admitted everywhere, like Racine. Nor would

he have been indifferent to this kind of distinction. Independent as his character was, he would have yielded to the requirements of etiquette; he would have taken an active part in the refined enjoyments of the only sovereign who ever understood the great art of grouping all manner of talents about himself, and absorbing them for the augmentation of his own glory. He was essentially a man of the world, and he might have been a genuine *grand seigneur*. The friendship of the Prince of Condé, the company of Molière and Despreaux, would have charmed him more than formal honors. He would have had a far happier life; but would he have been a greater man to-day? Would he have made, in an age when life would have been so easy to him, the same deep impression which he has left upon our own? I think not. His weariness and disgust in the midst of a society which is growing every day more material have caused to vibrate in him the more hidden strings. For every wound which he has received, he has mounted higher. His renown has been only the more solid and brilliant for being slowly won, and an early death has but added to his fame. That sad consecration was not needed. He had had time enough.

The De Musset family, which originated in the Duchy of Bar, established itself at Blois and Vendôme, in the fifteenth century, about the time of the siege of Orleans. The first gentleman of that name mentioned in the "Gallia Christiana" is a certain Rudolphe de Musset, present as a witness at the ceremony of founding an abbey in the diocese of Paris, in 1140. I have else-

where spoken of Colin de Musset, a celebrated poet and musician of the thirteenth century, the contemporary and friend of Thibaut, Count of Champagne.[1]

Other De Mussets are to be found in the council of Louis, Duke of Orleans, and brother of Charles VI.; in that of Dunois, bastard of Orleans; fighting in the army of Charles VII. at the battle of Pathay; and in the household of the Princess of Clèves, the mother of Louis XII. Several of them were lords-lieutenant of the province of Blois. Two of them commanded the companies of arquebusiers, and certain free companies of fifty men under Henry III. François de Musset was killed at Philipsbourg, in attempting to quell a revolt of the German troops in the garrison. The most celebrated soldier in the family was Alexander de Musset, a chevalier of Saint Louis, and lieutenant of the king at La Rochelle, who distinguished himself in all the battles of the war of the Succession, and became the comrade in arms of Maurice of Saxony. He received several wounds, and only retired after sixty years of active service.

Minister d'Argenson, and the Marshals of Saxony, Lowendal, Belle-Isle, and d'Estrées wrote him flattering letters, which his heirs have carefully preserved.

Certain interesting alliances of the De Musset family are also to be noted. An indirect one with Joan of Arc, through her niece, Catherine du Lys, whose marriage Charles VII. desired to arrange, and to whom he gave a dowry; others with the Bombelles, the Du Tillets, the

[1] See a brief notice of the life of Alfred de Musset, in the large quarto edition of the poet's complete works published in 1866.

Du Bellays. The paternal grandmother of Alfred de Musset, Margaret Angélique du Bellay, the last female child of that name, belonged to a family which prized literary no less than military distinction. She married her second son, Joseph Alexander de Musset, to Jeanne Catherine d'Harville, an extremely clever woman. Victor de Musset, the father of Alfred, was the offspring of this marriage.

According to the peerage of France, the arms of this family are a golden hawk, hooded and jessed upon an azure field perched on a bar gules, with the device, "Courtoisie, Bonne-aventure aux preux." La Courtoisie and Bonne-aventure were two patrimonial estates: the first remained in the family until the middle of the last century; the second, which formed a part of the patrimony of Alfred de Musset, was occupied by Antoine de Bourbon, the father of Henry IV., during the sojourn of the French court at the châteaux of Amboise and Blois. It lies two leagues from Vendôme, at the confluence of the Loir and a lesser river, at a place called Gué-du-Loir. It is well known that Antoine de Bourbon's was no edifying career. He frequently sought relief from the tedium of a life of show by retiring from the court to Bonne-aventure, where he gave shelter to certain damsels rather less virtuous than Queen Catherine's maids-of-honor. The secret of these pleasure parties was ill kept; and the fame of them reached the ears of the poet Rousard, who chanced to be at Poissonière, not far from Vendôme. Rousard composed a song on the frolics of the king, the refrain of which was, "*La bonne aventure au gué, la bonne aventure!*" This satirical lyric went

from one end of France to the other, and nurses sing the air of it to this day.[1]

The foregoing details are addressed to persons who are curious in matters of genealogy and heraldry. Here are a few for those who interest themselves in the mysterious laws of hereditary transmission. It is only by an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances that Nature succeeds in producing a man of genius. *Savants* affirm that a single case of high intelligence will retard by three generations the progress of idiocy in a feeble-minded family. Apparently, the introduction of one inferior woman into an intellectual family is quite enough to debase the mental faculties of three generations: these facts are not sufficiently heeded in marriage. The maternal grandfather of Alfred de Musset used to relate that he said to himself, after his third interview with the lady whom he afterwards married, "There is the woman whom I *need*," and that a month before the marriage he knew nothing of the fortune of her parents, nor what dowry she would receive. But this same grandfather was an original character; a person of antique simplicity, a charming spirit, and a poet besides.

Claude Antoine Guyot-Desherbiers was of an old family in Champagne, and came to Paris to study law, under the reign of Louis XV. He was admitted to the

[1] In the collections of popular songs, this familiar refrain is variously given. To insure correct spelling we must go back to Rousard, and remember that Bonne-aventure was situated on the Gué-du-Loir. The song quoted by Alceste in the first act of the "Misanthrope" is evidently derived from this of Rousard's; but the refrain, "*J'aime mieux ma mie augué*," is perfect nonsense.

bar, and afterwards made a magistrate. During the excitement which preceded the Revolution, he became the friend of the Abbé Morellet, of M. Suard, of the *savant* Cabanis, the astronomer Lalande, Merlin de Douai, De Barras, and others, into whose hands it was destined that power should presently fall. The tenth of August having abolished his seat on the bench, Guyot-Desherbiers lived in retirement till the end of the Revolution. After the 9th of Thermidor, he was appointed president of the committee on civil legislation. In this position he exerted his influence to save some heads from the scaffold; among others, that of the Baron de Batz, who had tried to effect the escape of the queen and her children from their prison in the Temple. He even ran the risk of keeping M. de Batz hidden in his own house during the pursuit of the revolutionary tribunal.

M. Guyot-Desherbiers was endowed with a prodigious memory. At an advanced age, he amused himself by reciting whole comedies, playing all the parts with a degree of talent and spirit which delighted his audience, his grandchildren especially. I have heard that the excellent Carmontelle, several of whose proverbs he knew by heart, took especial pleasure in hearing him recite them; and that this performance revealed to the author himself gleams of wit and shades of meaning of which he would not otherwise have dreamed.

Our grandfather's feeling for poetry was somewhat capriciously manifested; but that which especially distinguished M. Guyot-Desherbiers was a Gallic gayety, and a picturesque way of saying things, which imparted

a peculiar charm to his conversation. This original turn of mind reappears in the comedies of his grandson, especially in the characters of Fantasio and Valentin and of Octave in the "Caprices de Marianne."

From the maternal side, also, Alfred de Musset derived qualities no less remarkable. M. Desherbiers had married Marie Anne Daret, a person of rare merit and excellent judgment, — a woman who gave good counsel, as her husband was fond of saying. Habitually grave and equable, our grandmother was at heart affectionate, tender, and impassioned; and, in moments of emotion, her eloquence carried one away. Her tall figure, the dignity of her countenance, the penetrating tones of her voice, and the unspeakable goodness of her heart have left a deep impression upon the minds of her grandchildren, — the memory of a kind of angelic creature. Her eldest daughter, who was very like her, transmitted to Alfred de Musset sensibility, eloquence, and pathos. It is through their union with distinguished faculties on the father's side, that these happy gifts have been enhanced to the utmost in the case of a single person.

Victor Donatien de Musset took a good rank in the military college at Vendôme, where he was a royal pupil. When he left school at eighteen, he had an elder brother already captain in a regiment at Bresse, and a sister who was queen's pensioner at Saint-Cyr with the promise of being made a canoness. On his return to his father's house, he found there a numerous and agreeable circle of relatives, friends, and neighbors. The eldest of the family was living at Cogners, near Saint-Calais. Other

relatives and intimate friends dwelt at Tours, at Blois, and at Chartres. Vendôme was the centre where they often assembled. For the sake of spending a few days together, they would traverse abominable roads ; but the cheer was good, and the time passed gaily. The entire circle was occupied with plans for making life as pleasant as possible, without a suspicion that they were on the very verge of a political cataclysm. The father of Victor de Musset — called M. de Pathay in the province, to distinguish him from his two brothers — was so entirely preoccupied with the fortunes of the son who was a captain, that he made up his mind one day that his second son must not marry. Submissive to the fate of a cadet, Victor Donatien had resigned himself to the Church, when the Revolution arrived and snatched off those clerical bands of which he was so ready to be rid ; whence it is fair to conclude that the events of 1789 gave to France one great poet who else would never have seen the light.

About the same time that his future father-in-law saved the life of Baron de Batz, Victor de Musset met on the highway of Tours a condemned nobleman who was being escorted to Paris and the scaffold. The sight of this unfortunate man moved him to the deepest pity. He brought up a hay-cart under the windows of an inn where the *gendarmes* had stopped, deposited the prisoner in it, drove off with him by cross-roads with which he was familiar, and eluded pursuit. His prowess would have cost him dear, had not General Marescot taken a fancy to the youth, given him shelter under the folds of the flag, and received him into his own service. Em-

ployed at first in the inspection of fortified places, Victor de Musset made the second Italian Campaign with the general, and on his return from Marengo was appointed chief inspector of engineers. His elder brother, following a star very unlike his own, had emigrated and fallen by a republican bullet in the ranks of Condé's army. During this interval, also, his parents had both died, only a few months apart. To repair these cruel bereavements he had recourse to marriage. One of his friends introduced him at the house of M. Desherbiers, whose eldest daughter he sought in marriage, and was readily accepted.

Victor de Musset remained in the War Department until 1811, when he was made head of a division (*chef de bureau*) in the Ministry of the Interior. Superseded in 1818 by M. Lainé for the expression of liberal opinions, he took an active literary part in the Restoration movement. In 1821, he published an excellent edition of the works of J. J. Rousseau, and shortly afterwards a careful and valuable work on the life and writings of the Genevan philosopher, M. de Sémonville, who chanced to meet and become attached to him, and caused him to be appointed librarian of the Chamber of Peers. In 1828, when General de Caux joined the political coalition which goes by the name of M. de Martignac, Victor de Musset was called to the War Department, in the capacity of chief clerk (*chef du cabinet du ministre*), whence he passed to the department of Military Justice, in which he remained until his death.

During his long administrative career, Victor de Musset was fortunate in being able constantly to exer-

cise the distinctive qualities of his disposition; namely, an inexhaustible kindness and serviceableness. Never did a man in power take so much trouble in the service of others; display such constant activity, energy, and courage in assisting and protecting the unfortunate and the persecuted. It may well be supposed that occasions were not lacking. I will cite but two.

Near the close of the Empire, an *émigré* named D'Hotland returned to France, burdened with a numerous family, and stripped of all his resources. He asked employment and bread for his children of M. de Musset, who appointed him inspector of the central police-station at Melun. Almost as soon as he was installed in office, he was denounced to the Emperor as an old royalist, and from the higher realms of government came the order for his instant removal. The minister summoned the head of the bureau, who undertook an energetic defence of his creature, in which he offered himself as surety for the persons whom he employed, claiming that he had the free choice of his subalterns, and was responsible for them. At the end of a month a new complaint was lodged, and there was a fresh order for immediate removal, this time in terms so peremptory that the minister was terrified. But M. de Musset refused to be intimidated. At the risk of his own removal, he addressed to the Emperor a second communication, yet firmer than the first, in which he denounced with indignation the scheme of the informers. It was not without hesitation that the minister M. de Montalivet included this paper in his portfolio; but it came back the next day with this postscript in Napoleon's own

hand, — "The chief of the bureau is right," and the poor official kept his place.

The other affair was more important than the preceding, and created some excitement. One Fabry — an overseer or commissary of troops, I do not know which — was accused of embezzlement, tried before a court-martial, condemned to the galleys, and there died. Fifteen years afterwards, the proofs of his innocence were discovered. As the heirs of Lesurques, his wife and children demanded his rehabilitation, which could not however be effected without the passage of a law in both Chambers. This was in 1831, and it was fortunate for Mme. Fabry that she found M. de Musset in the department of military justice. She made him enter into her feelings and share them for a year. The minister of war positively shrieked when the chief of the bureau proposed to award her an indemnity of a hundred thousand francs ; but, after repeated discussions, they kept to that figure and proposed the law. The statement of the case was a piece of genuine eloquence ; and the day on which Mme. Fabry gained her cause before the Chamber of Deputies was a holiday at home. This *obligingness*, carried even to the point of self-sacrifice, was once a peculiarly French quality, but is now no longer in vogue. It has been replaced by the American precept, "Time is money ;" and, ever since men began to fancy that time can be estimated in cash, they have ceased to spend it in the service of others.

To such qualities of heart Victor de Musset united those graces of the mind which go to make up what we call an amiable man,— a sparkling gayety, an astonishing

promptitude of repartee, and profound learning of which he made no parade. He would tell a story in a few words, and with a *bonhomie* which concealed great art. At table, among his intimate friends, when enlivened by wine and good cheer, his gayety would fly to his head, and a running fire of jests and droll sallies ensued; but on these festive occasions, as on graver ones, the moment he perceived a trace of unfriendliness, his tongue became sharper, his eye flashed fire, his retort was biting, and he straightway became calm. And, as he never came out of such a skirmish otherwise than victorious, he became the terror of the snappish and surly.

On one of his visits to Vendôme, he took my brother and myself to see a country gentleman in the neighborhood when the mercury stood at twenty-five degrees.[1]

Our neighbor was penurious, and, in place of the refreshments which are invariably offered in the provinces to every visitor, he exhibited two ancient stone statues recently disinterred.

"You are one of the learned," said our host mockingly, "and will doubtless recognize at once the two saints whose images these are."

"Perfectly," replied M. de Musset. "One is evidently Saint Niggard and the other Saint Glutton;" and, relieved by the delivery of this scratch, he smiled affably upon his neighbor. Victor de Musset wrote one comedy in verse, which was not found among his papers.

[1] Celsius; that is, about 78° Fahrenheit.

PART FIRST.

FROM 1810 TO 1828.

I.

ALFRED DE MUSSET was born on the eleventh of December, 1810, in the heart of old Paris, near the Hôtel de Cluny, in a house which still bears the number, — 33 Rue des Noyers.[1] At thirty-seven in the same street lived our Grandfather Desherbiers, and a great-aunt, the proprietress of a garden which extended to the base of the ancient church of Saint Jean de Latran, now demolished. All the great-nephews of Mme. Denoux took their first steps in this garden. Alfred de Musset used to say, jestingly, that in his childhood he was just as stupid as another; but I do not hesitate to assert that he gave early evidence of a rarely precocious intelligence. After he had been to church for the first time, he asked his mother, as innocently as possible, whether she would take him again next Sunday to see the *comedy of the Mass;* nor had he any suspicion of the Voltairean character of his remark. If half the noteworthy things which children say are attributable to ignorance, there are others to which we give little heed, but which reveal, amid the simplicity of the child, the character of the future man. Here is one. When Alfred was three years old, some one gave him a pair of red shoes, which

1 This street, partially destroyed by the recent embellishments of Paris, is no longer to be recognized. One may get an idea of what it was from other streets in the same quarter, as yet untouched by the hammer, — the Rue Galande, for example.

he admired exceedingly. He was being dressed, and was in a great hurry to go forth in the new foot-gear whose color took his eye. He quivered with impatience while his mother combed his long curls, and at last cried out in a tearful voice, "Oh, make haste, mamma, or my new shoes will be old!"

We can but laugh at this vivacity, but it was the first symptom of an impatience for pleasure, a disposition to devour the time, which was never calmed nor contradicted for a single day. Here is another in which the child plainly knows what he is talking about. He had committed some peccadillo or other; and his young Aunt Nanine, of whom he was especially fond, told him that, if he did so again, she should not love him any more.

"You think so," he replied; "but you can't help it!"

"Indeed I can, sir," was the aunt's reply; and, to give greater effect to her menace, she assumed as stern an air as possible. The child scanned her face carefully and a little uneasily, for a few minutes, until he detected an involuntary smile, when he cried out, "But I can *see* that you love me!"

Some other misdemeanor, graver apparently than the last, had led one day to his being shut up in the *dark closet*. When I was of his age, if a like misfortune overtook me, I never budged an inch, but endured my imprisonment in a transport of pride. He, however, the moment he was shut up, began to bemoan himself as if he had been *in carcere duro*.

"Oh, how miserable I am!" he cried. "How can I have deserved to be punished by so good and loving a mamma? I must be dreadfully naughty if she is angry

with me! How can I make her forgive me? What a wicked child I am! It is God who is punishing me."

He went on for a long while in the same pathetic strain. Finally, his mother, touched by so deep a repentance, went and opened the door; whereupon the prisoner, who had never dreamed of such success, cut short his lamentations, and remarked in an indignant and reproachful tone, "Pooh! you are not very pitiful!" (*attendrissante.*)

Among the recollections of childhood, this word remained as a memorable thing, and Alfred himself liked often to quote it. He liked better still to recall another remark, equally childish, but foretelling, to one disposed to heed the indication, the man of imagination. In one of the chambers of our old house there was an immense beam in the ceiling, which the baby regarded with a sort of terror. One day his Aunt Nanine wished to take away from him a very young kitten which he was holding by the head, to the great displeasure of the animal. After clinging long to the little beast, he saw that he should be forcibly deprived of it, and gave it up; exclaiming furiously, however, in the style of Camille's malediction, "There! Take your cat! It will scratch you; it will tear your gown; and the beam will fall on your head; and I shall go and dine at Bagneux."

At Bagneux, in the summer-time, the whole family used to meet every Sunday at the house of our great-aunt Denoux, — a beautiful country seat, where the children enjoyed themselves exceedingly. Mme. Denoux was greatly flattered when she learned that the utmost conceivable happiness to her small nephew was going to

dine with her. Many and many a time since then, when I have wanted to interfere and remonstrate with him, Alfred has answered, "Yes, and the beam will fall on my head, and you will go and dine at Bagneux!"

I am guilty of no wanton exaggeration, when I say that his first love dates from the year 1814; and this love was none the less intense for being juvenile, although it had subsided into friendship before the days of genuine amours. Alfred was less than four years old when he beheld enter his mother's house one day a young lady, to him unknown. She was from Liége, which had then ceased to belong to France, and she rehearsed the story of the invasion, the counter-strokes of which they felt at Liége, where her father was an imperial magistrate. The tale was a moving one, and the narrator expressed herself with singular grace. The baby was smitten. From the sofa where he sat surrounded by his playthings, he heard her to the end without a word, when he rose and requested to know the name of the young lady.

"It is one of your cousins," they told him. "Her name is Clelia."

"Ah, she belongs to me!" he cried: "then I will take her and keep her!"

He seized her in fact, and made her tell him, not only the story of the invasion and the return to France, but a hundred other tales which she invented to please him, with the most captivating facility. He could not exist without his cousin Clelia. The instant she arrived, he drew her away to a corner, and began, "Now, then, you see"— This was the signal for inexhaustible com-

munications, of which she never tired. Finally, he asked his cousin to marry him, in all seriousness; and, not being refused, he exacted of her a promise that she would go with him to the Curé just as soon as he was old enough; after which he considered himself to all intents her husband. Clelia was obliged to return with her parents to the province, and the separation cost floods of tears. The infant's fancy seemed to have all the characteristics of a violent passion. "Do not forget me!" he said, when his cousin was taking leave.

"Forget you," she cried: "why, you don't seem to understand that your name is engraved on my heart with a penknife!"

To qualify himself for correspondence with his lady, he flung himself into his reading and writing lessons with inconceivable enthusiasm. When the young maiden actually married a husband of less tender years, it became necessary to make a mystery of it, and to give the hint to some twenty persons. One day some one of them, forgetful of instructions, made some allusion to Mme. Moulin, — Clelia's new name; when the child sprang impetuously into the midst of the circle.

"Whom are you talking about?" he said. "Who is Mme. Moulin?"

"This is she," was the answer, indicating a young lady whom he did not know, and whose presence was most opportune.

He looked attentively at the person designated, and then returned to his play. A few days later, our new cousin, M. Moulin, came to see us.

"I have seen your wife," said Alfred to him. "She isn't bad, but I like mine better."

The secret was kept in this way for a number of years. At last, when the serious business of education and the interests of school life had changed the current of his ideas, Alfred was informed that it had been impossible for his cousin to wait for marriage until he was old enough to take a wife. After the first shock occasioned by the revelation, he inquired, trembling, whether it were possible that Clelia had been mocking him. When they assured him that she still loved him as an elder sister, his anxiety was allayed. He reflected for a moment, and replied, "Well, I will be content!" As if he could have understood the difference between a wife and a sister!

Mme. Moulin lived at Clermont, in Beauvoisis, with her husband and children. We were closely united by community of interests no less than ties of blood. But suddenly, in 1836, there arose a misunderstanding between us. We differed about a matter of business. Sharp letters were exchanged, and there was even talk of a lawsuit. Alfred set off by *diligence* for Clermont. He entered his cousin's house unannounced: they both burst into tears, and the lawsuit stopped there. From that time forward, our friendship was never interrupted. Alfred had great confidence in the taste and judgment of his Cousin Clelia. She came to Paris in 1852, to be present at his reception by the French Academy, and the very last time he saw her he said to her: "When they get up a gorgeous edition of my works on the thickest of paper, I shall have a copy bound for you in

white vellum with a gold band, as an appropriate memorial of our attachment."

I need but to recall my own first impressions, in order to understand those of my brother, concerning the great events of 1814 and 1815. More than once we wept together over the misfortunes of our country, without at all comprehending their magnitude. As the elder, I undertook to have political opinions, which my brother trustfully adopted, and I assisted his natural precocity. We were brought up in the admiration of Napoleon, of whom our mother spoke with an eloquence which filled us with enthusiasm. This great figure, which we appreciated after our own fashion, represented to us, first of all, *the ideal soldier*, the warrior, always victorious. Before we understood the quality of his genius, we regarded him as infallible in every respect.

To us the Emperor was always right. The snows of Russia had conquered him to be sure, but the snows were to blame; and, sooner than acknowledge an imprudence or mistake in the life of our hero, we would have brought the charge against God himself. Our idolatry did not come quite to this pass, however, because we found plenty of mortals to accuse. One day a sack of grain was brought to our house, and deposited in a corner of the office. The Emperor, they said, was coming to defend Paris; and we must expect the miseries of a besieged city. These precautions amazed us. If the Emperor was coming to the aid of Paris, what was there to fear? Was it not evident that the enemy could not take it? But the Emperor did not come. One day our Uncle Desherbiers went off with his gun on his shoulder

to fight on the defences. That day, there was growling of cannon, and the servants were all in the street listening to the noise of the battle. The sound died away; and our uncle came back, black with powder, his clothes and hair in disarray. A few days later, the name of Marmont flew from mouth to mouth, coupled with a thousand curses. We learned with horror that men existed capable of betraying the Emperor and their country. What the charm of that could be, no one could make us understand. Good Sylvain Rondeau, a stalwart peasant whom our father had taken for a servant, tried vainly to explain it to us; but the results of treason appeared only too plainly, when we saw the Prussian soldiers setting up their cooking apparatus on the garden-beds of the Luxembourg, and defiling the lake water by washing their shirts in it. On the square of the Odéon, we found the first proclamation of Louis XVIII. The bill was slightly attached, and I sprang at it and tore it down. The prudent Sylvain was obliged to drag me away by force. Discord reigned in our mother's drawing-room: half of our friends had already declared for the new régime, and they quarrelled, tooth and nail. Happily the spring came, and we were taken to our great-aunt Denoux, at Bagneux.

There were some Hungarian hussars lodged among the servants in the house at Bagneux. One of them, an old subaltern officer, with a fine martial figure, took a fancy to me. The moment he caught sight of me, he would beckon me to approach. I used to put my foot upon the stone bench in the stable, and he would black my boots assiduously. During the process I

would say, — well knowing that he understood no French, — "Black away, you old Cossack!"

But the old soldier took us around the garden on horseback with such complaisance that by degrees he won our affection. The day the regiment left, we went to bid our old friend Martin good-by. Before mounting, he clasped us in his arms, and great tears rolled down upon his grizzled moustache. Perhaps the good man had left children in his own country, from whom he had parted more sorrowfully even than from us.

In the month of June of that year, 1814, I was separated from my brother for some days. Our father was looking for a wife for a cousin of his, and our mother had precisely what was required; namely, a charming young unmarried cousin of her own. This cousin lived at Joinville. I was left with our great-aunt Denoux, while the rest went to Champagne, where the wedding was to take place. On the journey, my brother's blonde head, always at the opening of the post-chaise, attracted the attention of the peasants, who imagined him to be the King of Rome. There was a row in one village where they stopped to change horses, and they escaped with some difficulty from the hands of the Champagners, who were persuaded that they beheld the son of the great exile of Elba.

Our mother enjoyed, like the Emperor Napoleon, the privilege of infallibility. Our trust in the superiority of her knowledge, and the certainty of her conclusions, was boundless; and in fact she was very seldom mistaken. One evening, in the winter of 1815, when she was putting me to bed, I heard her, through the open door

of the children's sleeping-room, pronounce these words, — "This cannot last. The Bourbons do nothing but blunder. We shall see the Emperor back again."

I sprang with one bound to my brother's bed, who was already asleep. I woke him with the tidings that the Emperor was immediately coming back. He asked me how I knew, and when I told him that our mother had just said so, he had no more doubt about it than I. We awaited the advent of our hero with extreme impatience. Finally, on the twentieth of March, he came; and the event which astonished the world appeared to us perfectly natural.

On the twenty-first of March, Sylvain took us into the garden of the Tuileries. An innumerable multitude blocked the approaches to the palace. The cheers, endlessly repeated by ten thousand voices, became one continuous sound, so that one could only hear the last syllable *eur* in an immense murmur. We succeeded in slipping into the crowd, just under the balcony of the pavilion d'Horloge. There the Emperor presently made his appearance, surrounded by his principal officers. He wore the uniform of the dragoons, with white trimmings and riding-boots. His head was bare, and he waddled a little in walking, as though encumbered by his *embonpoint*. I can see, even now, the fat pale face, the Olympian brow, the eyes set like those of a Greek statue, the piercing look which he bent upon the crowd. How unlike he was to the men around him! What a contrast, in features and expression, to those vulgar types! It was verily Cæsar amid the blind instruments of his will. Alfred de Musset was then but

little more than four years old; but this poetic figure struck him so vividly that he never forgot it. We devoured it with our eyes for the fifteen minutes or so that it posed before us, and then it vanished for ever, leaving an indelible impress upon our childish imaginations, and in our hearts a love that approached fanaticism.

One day in the month of April we saw defile, under the trees of a boulevard, a band of conscripts and enlisted volunteers. No doubt they had come a long way, and by forced marches. They were exhausted, gasping, and all in tatters. The spectacle was heart-rending. We had decided that Sylvain Rondeau ought to join the army; but he was deaf to our appeals, and made great sport of our reproaches. The six months which elapsed after the passage of the troops appeared so long a time to us, that we began, for very weariness, to interest ourselves in something beside the war. One morning our mother came out of her chamber in a flood of tears, and rent by agonizing sobs. We followed her to our father's study, weeping and wailing too. It was thus that the news of the Waterloo disaster spread through the house. I can hear the clamor of the women now. A little while after came two Prussian officers with their ticket entitling them to quarters. Two rooms had been prepared for them on the second floor. They wanted to see the drawing-room. Our mother came out upon the staircase, closing the door behind her, and assured them that they could not be admitted there. One of the officers then attempted to snatch the key from her; but she flung it out of the window into the court, and

declined to be intimidated by their threats and their oaths. Our father entered in the midst of the altercation, took the Prussians back to their head-quarters, and returned with two other officers of a more placable temper.

Every evening the discussions between our parents and our friends were renewed with more animation than ever. My brother and I could not comprehend these differences of opinion. All that was said about the constitutional rights of the peers, and the claim of the legitimate princes to the throne, was Hebrew to us. It was unanimously decided in our own little councils that we would remain true to our Emperor, that our swords and our life-blood belonged to him alone, and that he would certainly come back one day and require them of us, and lead us to Vienna and Berlin as he had done our fathers. Until a new miracle like the return from Elba should come and restore to us the object of our worship, we bade a temporary farewell to politics.

Of the year 1816 we preserved only the memory of an intolerable imprisonment, occasioned by the continuous rains. Our cook Eulalie laid the blame of the bad weather and the destruction of the crops to the return of the Bourbons, which seemed to us an incontrovertible position, and strengthened us in our hopes of a better future. However, in the next year, I was sent to a boarding-school, where my brother came only in the morning as a day pupil, and returned home at night. Upon the narrow stage of that school, with its hundred pupils, appeared all the political passions by which

France was then torn. There were royalists, liberals, hypocrites, and informers. The first held their heads high, and the local government, that is to say the head of the institution, showed them a marked partiality. They had all sorts of privileges, places of honor among the rest, awarded, not for good lessons or good conduct, but for the political and religious views which they paraded. The most exalted of these young extremists sat at a separate table in the recess of a walled-up door, where there was a gorgeous blue paper covered with gold *fleurs-de-lis*. We would not for the world have aspired to the privileges of this class, and our indifference in this matter caused us to be classed, by our orthodox comrades, among the lukewarm and *suspects*. This unpleasant position attracted to us affronts, injuries, and persecutions. Happily, the preceptor supposed us more devoted to the existing order of things than we really were, and his protection saved us some ill treatment. But, fifteen years later, Alfred found in the reminiscences of this period the germ of his "Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle." My sorrowful estate as a constant boarder rendered this life of constraint and suspicion a great deal more painful to me than it was to my brother. I could not understand how my mother could leave me so far away: I even doubted her tenderness, and became desperate. When it came time to resume the yoke, after vacation, I would gladly have died. Happily I came home one day with scarlet fever, and my brother took it. There was no more question of banishing us from the paternal roof, and we had a tutor.

It was during our convalescence that Alfred was informed of the marriage of his cousin Clelia. To console the young swain for the loss of his bride, and to supply the place of the charming stories which she used to improvise for his amusement, we had recourse to books. We devoured together all the Persian and Arabian tales on which we could lay our hands: the "Thousand and One Days," the "Thousand and One Nights," and the sequel by Calotte. Our appetite for the marvellous was not satisfied by reading these tales a thousand times: we wished to act them as comedies.

We therefore built, in the first place, an oriental edifice, approached by a spiral staircase of at least twenty steps, the lowest of which was a music-book, and the uppermost a writing-desk. The door was a folio volume which was made to turn on its hinges by means of a cord passed through the loose binding at the back. We descended into the interior of this labyrinth by means of a ladder of upholstery, disguised by fanciful architectural ornaments. The other outlet of this monument could be used for exits, but not for entrances. It was a long plank smeared with wax sloping steeply to a mattress, down upon which we slid, and whereby we executed precipitate flights, effective aerial voyages, and the sudden apparition of the genie with the wonderful lamp. This construction represented by turns the palace of the Calif Haroun, and that of the noble Aboul-Kasem, the cave with the bronze gate, the grotto of Ali-Baba, &c.

Our play-hours were presently insufficient for enjoyments so keen, and in vain did our tutor take us off to

study. He could not withdraw us from the fantastic realms where we were living. The play went on all through our lessons, despite reprimands and punishments. We had talismans hidden in our pockets, and the red ring of Maugraby came out of our sleeves the minute our teacher's back was turned. In the evening, in our mother's drawing-room, we transformed into all sorts of animals the people who had not the good fortune to please us; and, when we were sent to bed, we slept the sleep of Abou-Hassan, the better to play next morning the tale of the "Sleeper Awakened."

These amusements lasted throughout the year 1818. We were then living in the Rue Casette, in a house belonging to the Baroness Gobert, widow of a general who had died gloriously under the empire. Her son, the sole survivor of eight children, was of a silent and melancholy turn, and a request came that he might be allowed to join our fairy performances. Léon Gobert was a singular child, with a big head and a voice like a man's, and I did not then remember ever to have seen him laugh. He was just half way between Alfred and myself in age, being two years older than my brother. We considered him an excellent recruit for our company. He was carping and difficult at first; but by and by he came to like it, and caught our oriental fever. The baroness, always absorbed in the health of her son, gave up to us her drawing-room, where a frightful disorder soon prevailed. At the end of a month, our new companion was no longer the same child. His bright face, his energy, his liveliness, confounded the physician who had thought him the victim of an incurable malady. It

is certain that Léon Gobert passed without accident the age at which his brothers and sisters had been taken away. He survived his mother, and died in Egypt by his own imprudence, after having established a historical prize which furnished a life-annuity to Augustin Thierry.

II.

THE Baroness Gobert was so grateful for her son's restoration to life, that she was anxious to do us as great a favor as we had done her. She positively insisted on lending to our parents her estate of the Clignets, situated on the road to Viarmes, very near the forest of Carnelle. The house, which had been unoccupied and closed for many years, was queerly arranged and somewhat dilapidated. Outside, it looked like the fragment of some ruined convent, with its narrow and irregular windows. Buttresses sustained the walls, from which the stucco had fallen; and in the evening we could see the rats and dormice scudding along by moonlight. Inside, there were some ten principal rooms, of which three or four were habitable, and in these were collected the best pieces of the worm-eaten furniture. In the garden, — which had been laid out in the English fashion, with winding walks, old trees, and dense thickets, — we were delighted to observe a rampart-like terrace, a long alley bordered by cherry-trees laden with fruit, and a mound of artificial rock-work, which might have been erected by the decorative artist of our oriental comedies. This hillock came near occasioning a serious accident. In climbing upon it, Alfred laid hold of a rock, which became loosened, and rolled with him to the bottom. I thought he was dead; but he came off with a contusion of the leg, and a few bruises on his hands. The Duc

de Bourbon was not so fortunate. In one of our excursions in the great forest of Carnelle, we were following the chase at full speed. All at once, we heard a strange noise in the copse, and what seemed a black flying mass went by us, grazing the earth. It was the boar. He flung himself upon a rearing horse, who fell with his rider. The swooning prince was lifted up. He had several dangerous wounds, and was long confined to his bed; but recovered at last, and was reserved for a more terrible death behind closed doors.

Our residence at Clignets permitted us to display our enterprising temper upon a broader stage. Dr. Esparron had said to our mother, "What children need is sun, air, and exercise." We were given loose rein, therefore, and made ample use of our liberty. Our greatest delight was to propose some difficult expedition: like making the circuit of the garden on the top of the wall; or climbing a tree as far as some branch particularly designated; or taking a bee-line from one point to another, turning aside neither for hedges nor ditches. Our tutor, who was twenty-five, sometimes accepted our challenges. That was a happy day when he retreated before a pool of water, which his pupils leaped by means of poles. Our tutor was, however, an excellent man, accomplished without pedantry, who found means to teach us something even while he played with us. Our history lesson was given during our walk. He understood Italian, and we learned it orally. In certain hours, we were forbidden to speak French; and, when we did not know the Italian word, the master would hand us his pocket-dictionary. As for geography, he

made that study most agreeable by introducing stories of celebrated travellers; and Magellan, Vasco de Gama, and Captain Cook, took their turn in our fictions. The two years devoted to us by this excellent instructor were, to say the least, much pleasanter and more profitable than our school-years. His name was Bouvrain.

The farm of the Clignets lay alongside the mansion. The farmer, M. Piedéleu, was six feet high, with the shoulders of Atlas, although a little bent by age. His wife, who was but a few inches shorter than himself, looked like a giantess; and, when they went to mass on Sunday with their sons around them, they looked like a family from Brobdignag. The first time that we penetrated the farm limits, — it was one evening after dinner, — one of the Piedéleu sons had by the horns a vicious young cow who wanted to get away, and was pushing her backwards into the stable. Two other boys were unbending after the labors of the day, by standing on its end a long stone of enormous weight, which served them for a bench. The father was contemplating with folded arms a new wheel which had just been put to his cart, and the mother and youngest girl were preparing supper. Nothing is so admirable to children as physical strength. The interior of the farm-yard and the assemblage of colossi impressed themselves so deeply upon the memory of the eight-year-old scholar, that they were afterwards faithfully reproduced in the little story of "Margot."

These Piedéleus, good folk as they were, did us an ill turn. They had built a huge hay-rick in the middle of the court-yard, and we discerned in the rick a small

opening, a few feet above the ground, whence protruded the head of a cat. We started in pursuit of the animal, who came out on the other side of the rick by an interior passage. Enchanted by our discovery, we never went to the farm again without crossing the hay-rick by the cat's passage. One day two of the Piedéleu boys lay in wait for us, and seized the moment when we were in the centre of the gallery to stuff the two orifices with bundles of hay. To struggle with the colossi would have been useless. We thought of nothing but clearing a new passage at the side of the obstacle which opposed us. In a moment the air was exhausted, and I felt that we should be stifled. At last I succeeded by frantic efforts in clearing an opening, out of which I burst head-foremost upon the pavement of the court, crying to the peasants to save my brother. Most fortunately, he was directly behind, and came out by the same way as myself; for those good giants never budged, and only laughed at my fiery face and protruding eyes. When our tutor told them that if their fun had lasted five minutes longer we should have been suffocated, they asked what that was; nor could they ever be made to understand that there was any danger in being smothered with hay.

The Piedéleus also caused us another mischance. There was a great dove-cot at the farm, and the pigeons used to swoop down into the garden and upon the terrace of the mansion. One of these birds, less shy than the rest, honored us with his friendship. We used to give him grain, which he learned to take out of our very hands. One day a cook, from the village of Saint

Martin du Tertre, bought two pairs of pigeons, and besought the farmer's wife to kill him some more. When the tidings reached us, the massacre had already begun. We rushed to the farm, trembling lest we should recognize our friend among the victims. Unfortunately, our mother also arrived during the execution ; and, when she saw us eagerly watching the strangled birds and the bloody hands of Mme. Piedéleu, she thought we were enjoying the disgusting spectacle : her indignation was equal to her grief, and she overwhelmed us with reproaches. I may as well confess here that my disposition was different from my brother's, and that his was the better. He wanted to justify himself ; but I held back, and whispered to him to be silent. It was the injustice that I resented, and I repelled the notion of self-defence as a fresh outrage. My brother did not share this feeling ; but he respected it, and we both kept silence. Again and again, he asked me if it were not time to explain that great affair of the pigeons, and my answer was, "Not yet. We will see by and by." By and by he forgot all about it, and left to me alone the duty of arranging the vindication of our innocence. But we were men before the misunderstanding was removed.

The fogs and chill of November drove us from the country. Once more in our apartment at the Rue Casette, we were like wild plants in a hot-bed. Alfred had attacks of frenzy from the want of fresh air and space, very like those which are said to attend chlorosis in young girls. In one day he broke one of the drawing-room mirrors with an ivory ball, cut the new curtains

with the scissors, and stuck an immense red wafer on the map of Europe, in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. He got no reprimand for these disasters, because he appeared himself to regard them with consternation. It was I who undertook to keep them in his remembrance. When in our confabulations he asked my opinion about any thing which I did not approve, I used to say to him, "The glass is broken, but no matter; only try not to cut the curtains and stick wafers on the Mediterranean Sea." The reminder always made him laugh, and he heard me out with patience.

Among the books of our Grandfather Desherbiers, I found one day the "Legend of the Four Sons."

The perusal thereof plunged me into a deep reverie. A new world opened before me, — the world of chivalry. At the first word of it to my brother, he took fire. We cried aloud for romances. They gave us "Jerusalem Delivered," and we made but one mouthful of it. We must have "Orlando Furioso," and then "Amadis," "Pierre of Provence," and "Gérard of Nevers," &c. We were on the look-out for combats, deeds of prowess, and great feats with the lance and sword. Of the love-scenes we made little account, and when the Paladins began to bill and coo we were wont to turn the page. Our imaginations presently teemed with adventures. We rated far above the rest the heroes who owed their success to their own personal valor. For this reason, Renaud de Montauban bore off the palm from all his rivals, and became the type of an accomplished chevalier. All these fabulous people were weighed in our righteous balance, and received a rank in accordance with their merit, and each

one was included in a category. Renaud alone could not be classified. From Charlemagne to Maugis, and Huon de Bordeaux, no one was forgotten. If the great Don Quixote himself could have been present at our deliberations, he would have approved our conscientious impartiality, and I do not hesitate to say that his Highness would have confirmed most of our judgments.

This labor of classification once completed, we felt our minds relieved, and resumed our dramatic representations. Léon Gobert played his parts admirably, and the character which he personated best was that of Roland. From the moment of entering the lists, he laid about him with positive fury. Alfred, as the weakest, was privileged to wield the enchanted lance, which unseated, by magic, the strongest and boldest knights. Whoever was touched by that was bound to fall, and thus an equality was maintained among the combatants. But our passion for chivalry put the patience of our tutor to a severe trial. Too often, instead of listening to him, we were prancing through the forest of Ardennes. He was quite right to be angry, but we were incorrigible. To avoid his penalties we invented a diabolical *ruse*. On each page of Noel's Latin Dictionary was inscribed the name of a cavalier. Whoever had a word to look out in the dictionary must assume the character whose name he found on the page containing the Latin word. The name of the braver of two knights caused the pupil who got it to score one, that of the inferior knight lost one to the other; and thus, under the pretext of Latin translation, our game went on under the master's very nose. One day our good M. Bouvrain was

himself looking in the dictionary, and chanced upon the name of the traitor Ganelon ; whereupon, his two pupils burst into a laugh as silly as that of Nicole in the "Bourgeois Gentilhomme."

I should not dwell on these trifles, if I did not think that they suggest subjects for reflection to those who are devoted to the thankless calling of the teacher. Instead of making war on our infatuation for the heroes of chivalry, why might they not have turned our school-boy passion to good account in our education? All that was needed was to offer to our starved imaginations a better diet. Would it not have been possible, by a little tact and indulgence, to substitute the heroes of Plutarch for those of the *Bibliothèque bleue?* Our enthusiasm would have fastened upon Themistocles or Paulus Emilius, and we should have condemned the bad faith of Lysander no less severely than the perfidy of Ganelon. But it costs a great effort to study the characters, tastes, and instincts of children ; and I can well understand that it is more convenient to treat them all alike.

The year 1819 was distinguished in our memories by the important episode of a journey to Brittany. After staying a month in the little town of Fougères, where Uncle Desherbiers was sub-prefect, we went to Rennes to visit a friend of our father. The artillery regiment quartered in the town afforded the inhabitants the spectacle of a polygon by night. On the day succeeding the celebration, there was a party at the house of our host, and several artillery officers were present. The colonel's son, who professed to know how to draw, sketched upon a sheet of paper some mortars and can-

non ; and, to represent the curve described by a bomb-shell, he naïvely traced some regular semicircles.

"That is wrong," said Alfred. "The bomb is fired in a straight line, and then, as it loses its force, it changes its direction little by little, until the weight of it brings it down to the ground. And it doesn't go in a circle, but in a line that is curved in the middle and straight at both ends."

And he took the pen and drew some parabolas on the paper. The colonel's son, trained in the artillery, was vain and obstinate enough to defend his own work. But an officer to whom they appealed as umpire looked with amazement on the babe who had solved a problem in statics, and did not fail to assure our mother that her infant phenomenon would one day be a great mathematician. He was mistaken. Alfred had no taste for the exact sciences ; but he had a correct eye, and could tell what he saw.

We had been promised a sight of the ocean ; and our host took us in a carriage to Dinan, where we embarked with other passengers upon a river which empties into the bay of Saint Servan. A violent storm broke upon us at nightfall, just as we were out on the open sea. A squall struck our bark and snapped the mast, and whirled away into the air the shako of a soldier. The passengers set up a doleful wail, and the captain lost his head. Fortunately, a large fishing-craft, just entering port, overhauled us off Cape Malo, where we arrived damp and chilled, but enchanted at having made the ocean's acquaintance through the medium of a slight shipwreck.

On our return to Paris, in the early days of October, our tutor expressed a wish to leave; and the man who applied for the place was an ass who affected fashion, but whose ignorance soon became manifest. Our father thought a public education the only suitable one for boys, and he placed me in an institution. My brother remained at home and attended classes as a day-scholar in the college of Henry IV. He was but nine years old, but they thought him fit to enter the sixth form, which proves that good M. Bouvrain's lessons had not been so bad. On the day that he entered school, the spoiled child was greeted by the hootings of his companions. He had imprudently been allowed to retain his beautiful light curls, and a scalloped collar turned down upon his shoulders. He came home weeping, and insisted on having his hair cut at once. But, though he took this experience tragically, it was one of those mortifications which help to mould the character. It is altogether wholesome to come in contact with ridicule and ill-nature, when one is released from the maternal apron-string. We cannot learn too early to defend ourselves, and not to rely on the indulgence of others. This lesson, however, was followed by a far more cruel test, such as few have undergone at so tender an age.

Alfred early took a high rank in composition, and was noticed by the professor. The head of a large institution, where the course was very severe, wanted to take him gratuitously into his own house, declaring that he would be responsible for the boy's obtaining prizes at the general competition. Our mother rejected the offer decisively, fearing that her son's health would be sacri-

ficed to the reputation of the establishment. She never repented her prudence. There was no need to stimulate Alfred's ambition; and, without working very hard, he was sufficiently successful. Once, when he was not assigned a place on the *seat of honor*, he was so aggrieved as to be almost inconsolable. He nearly cried his eyes out, and was afraid to be seen; but, when he found that he was welcomed even more tenderly than usual, he realized, with a rapture which he never forgot, that he was yet nearer to his mother's heart than he had supposed. On the other hand, he was the smallest member of his class; and a ferocious hatred was excited among the baser sort of his fellow-pupils against the little *blond* who was always at the head, and whom the professor set above the rest. The laziest formed among themselves an offensive league against him; and every day, when he came out of the college-building, the model pupil was saluted with a shower of blows. They chased him into the very arms of the servant who waited for him at the gate; and the court-yard being a large one, he arrived very ill-used, — his clothes in disorder, and sometimes even with blood upon his face. The conspiracy lasted for more than a month, and all that while the poor child had to contend against the base passion of envy, under its most brutal and cynical form; so that he learned in his very infancy that the vulgar do not bear themselves toward superior men as they do toward the rest of the world. It was Léon Gobert who brought this infamous persecution to an end. He attended the school for history lessons only. One day, seeing his friend fall into one of these ambuscades, he flung himself into the

mêlée like a young lion, and dealt such terrific whacks on all sides that envy succumbed, and the league was dissolved for ever.

After my brother and I were separated, I saw him only on Sundays. On that day we returned to our chivalric romances ; but whether or no the cares of real life had shaken our faith and cooled our enthusiasm, it is certain that we did not bring to our make-believe the same ardor as heretofore. One day Alfred asked me seriously what I thought of magic, and particularly of the enchanter Merlin. I was obliged to allow that those stories were probably all made up by poets, and other ingenious writers ; that the wonderful adventures of Roland were fables, and that Merlin had never enchanted anybody.

"What a pity!" said Alfred, with a sigh. "But even if you can't make yourself invisible, or go in a flash from one place to another, or have a genie at your beck, there is nothing to hinder your making secret staircases in a thick wall, or having a hidden door in a wainscot panel, which will open by pushing a spring, if not by saying magic words."

I told him that I firmly believed in hidden staircases and secret doors.

"Well, then, what are we thinking about?" he cried. "We have lived in this house several years, and how do we know that there isn't, even here, some mysterious passage or other, or some way of going from one story to another through the inside of the walls?"

But a searching examination convinced us of the mournful truth that there was no mysterious outlet to

our house. When I saw how disappointed my brother was, I wanted to afford him one moment of illusion. The dwelling of the Baroness Gobert had only a ground-floor and two stories.[1] We occupied the second; and we had, besides, a large kitchen under the roof, and two servants' rooms which looked into the gutter. At the risk of breaking my neck, I climbed by this gutter from one chamber to the other. The maid-servant had inserted in the wood-work a gilded copper hook with a screw, to hang her watch upon. I decided that this hook should be the key of a hinged panel; and I pompously informed my brother that there was a secret passage in the partition between the two attics. The news excited him so much that he turned pale with joy. Before unfolding to him the mystery, I required him to allow me to make the transit without seeing how I did it. We mounted to the attic. He shut his eyes and stopped his ears with all the simplicity and good faith of a true believer. I slid noiselessly along the gutter. When he heard me call him from the next room, his surprise was extreme. The idea did not occur to him to open his eyes and watch me, for he shrank from finding himself face to face with the flat reality. He wished, however, to traverse the wall for himself; and, under my directions, he turned the copper key eleven times one way, and thirteen the other; and I know not how many more times from right to left, and left to right. He stayed there half an hour, thinking that he had made some mistake. At last I revealed my stratagem,

[1] This house, No. 27 Rue Casette, has recently had another story added.

and the magic was dispelled. Alfred thanked me for the deception as for a delicate attention ; but he felt the illusion to have been too early lost. He promised himself the pleasure of playing the same trick on our neighbor Léon Gobert ; but that youth had no faith. He made haste to open his eyes and dart at the gutter, so that the trick was not even played out.

The adventure of the secret door was just before the first of January. Whether by chance, or intentionally, our parents gave us for our New Year's present the Don Quixote of Cervantes, and that charming work dealt the last blow to our demoralized taste for chivalry. We saw more clearly than more rational readers that the work of Cervantes is full of wisdom, moderation, and good sense ; that it is calculated to clear the mind of extravagant and ridiculous rubbish ; and that it hits precisely, without overpassing, the end at which the author aims, — namely, as Cervantes himself says, to hold up to the contempt of mankind a false and absurd school of literature. So ended, in Alfred de Musset's childhood, the era of the marvellous and the *impossible ;* a sort of eruption which his imagination had to undergo, — a malady without danger for him, since he recovered from it at an age at which others are barely attacked ; and all the traces it left were a poetic and generous element, a certain inclination to look at life as a romance, a child-like curiosity, and a sort of admiration for the unexpected, — for concatenations of events and the caprices of chance. This slightly fatalistic tendency may be recognized in his novels and comedies, especially in the characters to which he lends his own views and feelings.

III.

FOR those unfortunates who go to school, the year is reduced to the six weeks of vacation: the rest is but a series of insipid days during which one flounders in Latin, with one's elbows on a desk, and when it would not be worth while to live, were it not conceded that there is no other way of becoming a man. Alfred de Musset was too conscientious in his work, too desirous of success, and too much afraid of failure, not to be perpetually agitated and unhappy during the period of his classical studies. A low rank was his despair. If he had not been able to commit his lesson to the very last word, he set forth for the college trembling with apprehension. He was pursued by remorse for even the slightest failures, and always thought himself to blame. At the beginning of every school year, he was greatly exercised about the change of professors. We learn from one who was especially interested in him that he made one leap from the sixth to the fourth form, and even then bore off the first prize at the end of the year. He thoroughly corrected his timidity afterwards, but never overcame his tendency to nervous anxiety.

In the vacation of the year 1822, our father decided to take us to see his old friends in the vicinity of Vendôme, most of whom were unknown to us. At Chartres, a burlesque reception had been prepared for us. We descended from the diligence in the midst of a group

of peasants, who were apparently stupefied with amazement when they recognized *Monsieur de Pathay.* They asked if the two striplings who accompanied him were his sons, and addressed us with quirks and puns which we did not at all know how to take. But M. de Pathay, more acute than Pourceaugnac, recognized all the mummers, one after another, except one wet-nurse, very loquacious and diabolically mischievous. It was a woman who had been a young girl when he left, and whom he found the mother of a family at the end of a dozen years. We regarded this merry company with amazement; but they all played their parts wonderfully well, and we retained a high opinion of the wit and liveliness of the people of Chartres.

At Vendôme a less amusing reception awaited us. Although the day and hour of our arrival had been announced to our old aunt the Canoness de Musset, she professed not to have expected us. Her little house in the faubourg Saint Bienheuré, with a tiny garden enclosed by a branch of the river, was very like those chill and silent interiors which Balzac loved to describe. There was an odor about it of penurious antiquity; and the shutters, perpetually closed, defended the mould and saltpetre on the walls from the sunlight. Three dogs — one a hideous pug — replied to our pull at the bell by inappeasable barkings. The mistress of the house received us grimly. The breakfast, for which we waited long, was so meagre that the good lady was ashamed of it; and she condescended to add a cluster of grapes, as sour as vinegar, which she plucked from the trellis. During this light repast, she gave us clearly to

understand that she could have dispensed with our visit. At intervals the brother and sister became red with anger. They exchanged a few flings and parted coldly. In 1830, when the noise occasioned by the publication of the "Contes d'Espagne" had penetrated even that moist retreat, the canoness consoled herself by a reproachful letter. She had always blamed her brother for his excessive love of literature; but it was the extreme of humiliation to have a poet for a nephew. She disowned and disinherited the males of our family, on account of the disgrace.

A few days of freedom under the old trees of Bonneaventure effaced the painful impression made by our visit to the canoness. The remainder of the vacation was divided between the little Château de Musset — where was then living a cousin of ours, who was also a devoted friend — and the ancient manor-house of Cogners, the hereditary seat of the head of the family. Cogners, elevated to a marquisate, during the regency of Anne of Austria, was a feudal castle, which derived, from certain large additions made in the seventeenth century, a character at once picturesque and majestic. The great winding stone staircase is a blemish to both stories. The modern portion, where the state apartments are, contains immense rooms, with windows of an extravagant height. In the old part, the rooms are irregular in shape, the doors narrow, the windows have deep seats. Between the two layers of a double floor in one of the chambers a secret retreat had been contrived, approached by a trap-door, concealed under a huge, high-posted, canopied bed. Women and priests had sought

refuge there during the storms of the Revolution. One of our fondest dreams was suddenly realized; but rather late, as often happens in this life. Great was Alfred's joy at being permitted to inhabit this chamber. Despite the fatigue of a day of travel, he could scarcely sleep for impatience to open the trap-door. He woke me at day-break, and we went down into the mysterious *entresol.* The room was low, but perfectly habitable. We came back covered with spiders'-webs, and when we discovered the subject of the fine tapestry which adorned our room to be Don Quixote taking the barber's tin dish for the helmet of Mambrino, we could not help laughing at our expedition.

Every thing, however, at the Château of Cogners, even the hospitable and patriarchal manners of the inhabitants, reminded us of by-gone times. We dined at two o'clock, and had supper at eight. The traveller, *curé*, physician, or military man who happened to be crossing the country, was sure of a plate at table, and room in the stables for his horse. In the evening, we gathered in a vast hall on the ground-floor, very dimly lighted in the far corners by a candelabrum with two arms, placed on a large stand in the centre. When one passed near the table, a gigantic shadow was projected upon the walls. While we waited for supper, the lord of the manor read aloud the lesson for the day. He declaimed certain passages with a solemnity truly comic, and never failed to take off his cap, when he came to the titles of Monseigneur the Dauphin, and her Royal Highness, Madame. It was no satire on the personages named, but merely his way of testifying his contempt for the new

power of the press, the importance of which he had not learned to understand as an organ of public opinion. The Marquis de Musset had been a member of the Chamber of Deputies for 1814. His son served in the king's body-guard, and his son-in-law in the guards of Monsieur. He had himself served under the old régime. At the age of eighteen, being then an officer in an Auvergne regiment, his fine bearing attracted the attention of Louis XV., who made him step out of the ranks that he might examine him more closely. His grand-nephews could only admire in him the graces of old age; but he was straight as a candle, and had a complexion of singular freshness, prominent eyes, an aquiline nose, and very handsome legs. He held his head high when he walked, and flung his feet forward, as if making his *entrée* into the royal drawing-room. His grand air, his correct language, and the fund of old stories which he told so well, inspired us with a mixture of curiosity and respect.

The marquis had had in his life one deep grief, aggravated by remorse, of which he never spoke, although time and religion had consoled him. He had lost by his own fault an eldest son of great promise. I remember that the subject was always avoided in the family when the children were present; still we had heard vague mention of our cousin Onésime, his fine parts and pleasant disposition. Later, I learned the story of his tragical death. His father had conceived the unfortunate idea of placing him, at fifteen, in the Institution Liotard, where more attention was paid to the religious sentiments of the pupils than to their intellectual de-

velopment. Onésime fancied that he was destined for the clerical profession, toward which he felt an invincible repugnance. He imparted his fears to my father, and besought him to intercede with the marquis and induce him to explain his intentions. On his own part, also, the youth wrote letter after letter; but he received only stern replies, and never the explanation which he desired. The father, buried in his province, did not at all comprehend the danger of these vague monitions. He saw, in the prayers and entreaties of his son, only a lack of submission. Onésime, never doubting that he was to be made a priest, penned a last desperate letter. The marquis was moved; but he decided on principle to make one more display, at least in words, of the rigor of paternal authority. In a reply more severe than those which had preceded it, he offered no explanation; but exacted a blind obedience. The fatal letter was hardly in the post-office, before the father, as though he had divined the consequences of his answer, set off in haste from Cogners for Paris, determined to withdraw his boy from the Institution Liotard. He arrived on the evening of the day when Onésime had committed suicide.

Our aged aunt, who was as devotedly pious as her husband, had in the end consoled herself as well as him for this terrible misfortune. She was an excellent lady, a genuine figure of the past, with very slight knowledge of the world, for she had never left her father's château when she removed on her wedding-day to that of Cogners, whence she never stirred. Her eldest daughter, who had not married, devoted herself to charity on a great scale. She had a kitchen and a dispensary for her paupers,

and read as many medical books as the parish doctor. She was often sent for in the middle of the night. At all hours and in all weathers, she would set forth, with her bundle under her arm, to carry aid to the sick. Neither fatigue nor failing health could stay her zeal for a single day. She led this devoted life in a lonesome region, with no reward save the blessings of the poor of the district, until the day when her strength sufficed only for praying to the God whom she had so nobly served.

Our good parents divided their caresses equally between my brother and me. Our uncle had an evident partiality for Alfred ; and so our aunt, actuated by a sense of justice, displayed the same for me. While the husband gave his favorite the finest fruit, the wife slipped tidbits into my plate. This milk-and-honey regimen was very satisfactory to hungry school-boys ; and, whenever we were asked where we wanted to spend our vacation, we clamored to go back to Uncle De Musset's. In 1824 we did so ; but this time an accident, of which any other child than my brother would not have made great account, mingled a fearful association with the delights of the castle of Cogners. Alfred was wild to go out hunting for the first time. A small single-barrelled shot-gun was procured for him ; and, under the keeper's direction, he was permitted to kill rabbits in the warren. One morning he was walking behind me, carrying under his arm the gun which he had just loaded, and the muzzle of which was pointed at my heels. The gun was worthless, the trigger was worn out, and somehow it went off, the charge of lead making a hole in the ground close to my right foot. I turned at the noise ; and, across a puff

of smoke, I saw my brother waver and fall. He had a nervous attack, followed by fever. The illness was short; but his passion for the chase was much diminished, his visit at Cogners was spoiled, and the number of the year, 1824, was always replaced by the periphrasis, — "the year when I almost killed my brother."

Alfred was then in his fourteenth year, and so far advanced in his studies that he might have graduated at fifteen, if he had not taken a double course in philosophy. The Duc de Chartres, who was his classmate, had received permission from his father, the Duc d'Orléans, to invite some of his school-fellows to the château of Neuilly on holidays. The best scholar in the class was, of course, among the invited guests. He found favor with all the Orléans family; especially with the mother of the young princes, who charged her son not to forget the little *blond*. It was a needless injunction. De Chartres, as he was called at school, had a marked partiality for Alfred, and during recitation used to write him heaps of billets upon bits of paper. They are mostly invitations to dine at Neuilly; but their tone is very free. I will quote the last only, which is in reply to a farewell note that the young prince thought too ceremonious.

"This is the last day that I shall come to school. As we shall not see one another for some time, I should be very much obliged if you would write to me. We are going on the 21st, and shall not come back before the 9th of August. We are going on a rambling tour to Auvergne, and Savoy, and the banks of the Lake of Geneva. Adieu, and ever yours.

"De Chartres.

"P. S. I wanted something besides your respects."

During the trip here mentioned, the prince addressed to his old school-fellow two long letters. The first, dated at Clermont-Ferrand, contains a detailed description of the mountains of Auvergne. The other is the story of an excursion into Switzerland, told with all the artlessness of youth. But I find in the same bundle of papers still another letter, — much more original, and called forth by some ebullition of friendly and familiar mirth. I think that this last is worth publishing. It is dated Sept. 14, 1826.

"My dear Friend, — It is only because I had nothing to say, that I have delayed writing to you so long. Nine study-hours — varied by horseback rides, and occasional stupid family parties at Montmorency, or the fair of Loges — do not offer much material for a letter. But today I have performed a splendid feat, and I must tell you about it.

"We went to the fair at Saint Cloud; and after we had been weighed, and had gone the round of the twenty-five-sou shops, and bought whatever we fancied, and eaten quantities of wafers, we went into the equestrian circus of M. le Chevalier Joanny. There were about a hundred persons present. M. le Chevalier Joanny, being five feet and eight inches high, came out in an old guardsman's uniform, made for a man of about five feet; so that the bottom of the waist was in the middle of his back. He had an embroidered waistcoat underneath, and his pantaloons were made to imitate Turkish trowsers. Then began a terrific noise, which was the overture. The inside orchestra — for, while the circus performance went on, they were all the time summoning spectators outside with trumpets — the inside orchestra consisted of six horns, all out of tune; and a trombone, played by a very young and very pretty woman. A Chinaman leaped into the ring. He had the top of a parasol for a hat, very dirty

drawers for breeches, and other things to correspond. As for the other performers, *Ab uno disce omnes.*

"At last, after a great number of feats and gambols, they all left the ring to make way for a monstrous elephant, who was destined to be the *theatre* of my exploit. The animal was very intelligent, and performed a number of feats at the command of his driver. When he was ordered to salute the company, M. le Chevalier Joanny explained to us that in India, 'at sunrise, these creatures by a sort of religious instinct salute the majestic orb of day.' What the devil has religion to do with it?

"When the elephant took a broom to sweep the hall, M. le Chevalier, who accompanied every act of the clumsy but knowing animal by some judicious reflection, informed us that, in India, little ladies of rank employ these creatures as housemaids to clean their boudoirs. Finally, he invited all who were so disposed to mount upon the elephant's back. Nobody stirred. Seeing the general backwardness, I determined to set an example: so I climbed upon the creature's back, along with the keeper and my brother Joinville. None of the spectators cared to follow us. As we passed the orchestra, I gravely removed my hat; and the musicians, not to be outdone in politeness, struck up the air, — 'Où peut-on être mieux.'

"Such, my dear friend, was the trait of heroism of which I wished to inform you, confident that you would appreciate it at its true worth.

"FERDINAND, P. D'ORLEANS."

IV.

THUS far we have seen in Alfred de Musset only a precocious child of vivid imagination, and an assiduous pupil, receiving with docility all that was taught him. But, in 1826, he began to give unusual signs of strength and independence of mind. He had been taught logic, analysis, and ratiocination; and he began to reason. Often after the recitation in philosophy, when he had heard the lesson with attention, he would shake his head, and venture to say, "It does not satisfy me." He would then review in a hundred different ways the question under discussion, probe it to the bottom, and come to a fresh conclusion. His compositions were full of his aspirations after truth. The professor — an excellent man, but extremely orthodox — was disturbed that his scholastic metaphysics were not received as Gospel-truth by his best scholar. He had, however, the good sense not to be angry. If only his fundamental principles were accepted, he would allow discussion of subordinate points. More than once, he gave a lesson to the whole class on the *duties* of the scholar. In the month of July, 1827, when Alfred had competed for the inter-collegiate prize, M. Cardaillac and another member of the university board came and told our father that his son would in all probability obtain the highest prize. The subject given out was a Latin dissertation on the Origin of Emotion. The essay of Alfred de Musset

had at once been adjudged the best, both in thought and manner; but the religious side of the question had appeared to be insufficiently developed. Another pupil, whose work showed less talent, had dwelt more upon this important point; so that the opinions of the examiners were equally divided. The head-master of the university — who was also Bishop of Hermopolis — had caused the scale to incline toward the lad who seemed more devout. It could hardly have been otherwise under the reign of Charles X. Some years later, the first prize was given to Alfred; but now he only obtained the second. At the moment of distribution, Monseigneur d'Hermopolis smiled to see mount the platform a little *blond* of sixteen, with a head so small that the crown dropped about his neck.

A prize is of no great importance, save as a test of collegiate success. The works of Alfred de Musset show that he did not stop there in the study of philosophy, but pushed his metaphysical researches very far. The attentive reader knows that the thinker in him is always abreast of the poet.[1] It is important, however, to a clear understanding of the man, that we should examine his mode of procedure in the search for truth. When he came in contact with a great mind, he began by conscientiously taking the place of a learner, in order thoroughly to fathom the doctrine or the system. He

[1] M. Victor de Laprade, in the discourse on Alfred's reception by the French Academy, which he had the distinguished honor to pronounce, let fall in the course of his eulogium, whether in carelessness or levity, the strange remark, "Alfred de Musset obtained, if you can believe it, the philosophic prize!" It was astonishing to nobody but M. Victor de Laprade.

adopted it. He was ready to profess and even practise it. But presently his reason was outraged upon some point: doubts arose, and the disciple became first judge and then dissenter. It was thus that I saw him travel by successive stages from Descartes to Spinoza, then to the new philosophies of Cabanis and Maine de Biran, arriving finally at that haven where he found the "Espoir en Dieu." In his search for the beautiful he pursued the same method. He began by enjoying whatever pleased him, yielding himself with ardor to the delight of enthusiasm, and he ended by examination and exact appreciation. In this twofold exercise of seemingly incompatible faculties, — namely, enthusiasm and critical penetration, — he acquired, not in literature only, but in all the arts, a soundness of judgment which, if he had had nothing else to do, would have made him one of the foremost critics of his time.

In pursuance of the new plan of study which he had marked out for himself, Alfred began paying special attention to the reading of foreign authors, drawing, music, and law. Repelled by the dryness of the law, he had a passing fancy for medicine; but M. Bérard's lessons in descriptive anatomy, and the dissection of human bodies, inspired him with an insurmountable disgust. His father's one fear was that he would be an idler, and yet he did not press him to choose a profession. It was the student himself who was alarmed by the discovery that he had no taste for either of the two more distinguished of the learned professions. He shut himself up in his own room, and remained there several days, a prey to the most melancholy reflections; and,

when I inquired the cause of his sombre mood, his answer was, "I shall never be good for any thing. I shall never practise any profession. Humanity in general is only too insignificant on this grain of sand where we live? I shall certainly never consent to be any particular kind of man."

He had no suspicion that he would, ere long, be classed among men so rare that not more than three or four of them appear in a century. His mortification was appeased when his drawing-master, amazed at his progress, told him that he might be a painter if he chose. At the notion that he might, after all, have a vocation, his courage revived. He spent his mornings in the Louvre, and his portfolios filled with sketches.[1] This passion for painting was, however, only a digression with which Nature amused herself, before revealing the way by which she was to lead him.

In the spring of 1828, our mother rented a small suite of rooms in a very large house at Auteuil. Chance gave us for a neighbor M. Mélesville, and charming relations sprang up between his family and ours. We acted comedies and improvised charades. We had sometimes for spectators the elder Brazier and M. Scribe, and Alfred enjoyed these reunions intensely. He was off to Paris early in the morning to pursue his studies, and

[1] Most of these sketches, among which were some original designs, were destroyed by Alfred himself. His friends often cut pages out of his album. I have still two finished drawings. One is a full-length portrait of Louise Bouvier, — a celebrated thief, detained in custody at Clermont; the other a head of Lord Byron. Mme. Maxime Jaubert has about fifty of Alfred de Musset's drawings. An album full of caricatures was given me by a lady cousin of mine, with whom he spent a month in 1842.

work in a studio; but he returned to Auteuil for dinner, often on foot by the woodland alleys of the Bois de Boulogne, and with no companion save a book. The day when he had taken André de Chenier's little volume to read by the way, he arrived in the country later than usual. Under the spell of that elegiac poetry, he had chosen the longest way. From delighting to re-read and recite verses which one loves to aspiring to compose the like, there is but a step; and Alfred did not resist the temptation. He composed an elegy which he has not thought it worth while to preserve, but it began thus,—

> "Il vint sur les figuiers une vierge d'Athènes
> Douce et blanche, puiser l'eau pure des fontaines,
> De marbre pour les bras, d'ébène pour les yeux.
> Son père est Noémon de Crète, aimé des dieux;
> Elle, faible et rêvant, mit l'amphore sculptée,
> Sous les lions d'airain, père de l'eau vantée,
> Et féconds en cristal sonore et turbulent," &c.

A youth came to the same fountain driving horses and mules, and while the animals crowded about the basin, the youth asked the maiden if she were the nymph of the spring. When he discovered that she was a mere mortal, he made love to her and invited her to share his home, of which he gave a poetic description. The maiden, whom her father had devoted to the worship of Diana, rejected the young man's proposals at first, but finally yielded. Then the jealous goddess pronounced a curse upon her, and the faithless priestess died just as the morning sun appeared above the horizon. This piece, which contained no less than a hundred stanzas, was finished in two days, or rather in two walks, and

with the exception of a song composed at the age of fourteen for his mother's birthday, these are the first verses which Alfred ever wrote.

The history of his second attempt belongs to the age of romanticism, and the great civil war in French letters. The classics yet held possession of the stage, where they defended themselves as in a redoubt: but the "Henry III." of Alexander Dumas was already written, "Marion Delorme" was on the stocks, and "Cromwell" published; and the famous preface to the latter work, in which the author had created a new school of poetry, had caused a fermentation in many a youthful brain. Even before he had finished his studies, Alfred de Musset had been introduced, by his friend and school-fellow Paul Foucher, at the house of Victor Hugo. There he had seen MM. Alfred de Vigny, Prosper Merimée, Sainte-Beuve, Émile, and Antony Deschamps, Louis Boulanger, &c. All of these had already given proofs of genius, and won more or less reputation. The time was spent in readings and literary conversations, in which everybody appeared to be of the same mind, although at heart they were often otherwise. Alfred did not try to resist the contagious enthusiasm which one breathed in the very air of the Cénacle. He soon became a neophyte in the new church, and was permitted to join the evening walks when they went to see the sunset, or to enjoy the view of old Paris from the towers of Notre Dame. On the morning after a meeting, where a good many ballads had doubtless been recited, the young listener pacing along under the trees of the Bois de Boulogne, and haunted by the musical rhythm which still sounded in

his ears, undertook to compose, first a ballad, and then a short romantic drama, both of which he afterward condemned to the flames. The scene was laid in Spain, in the castle of the old Sanchez de Guadarra. The daughter of this nobleman was singing one night at her window a plaintive song. Agnes had been twice affianced.

"Une main dans sa main, deux fois s'était glacée,[1]
Et, vierge, elle était veuve, en deuil de deux époux."

The two youths to whom she had been promised had died on the day after their betrothal. Her father had just proposed to her a third husband, Don Carlos, a brilliant cavalier, young and valiant. Old Don Sanchez had a high opinion of Don Carlos, and thus expressed his preference for the military profession: —

"Homme portant un casque en vaut deux à chapeau,
Quatre portant bonnet, douze portant perruque;
Et vingt-quatre portant tonsure sur la nuque."[2]

The brilliant Don Carlos arrived with his long sword and his gold spurs. Agnes allowed herself to be betrothed for the third time. During the ceremony, a monk was saying his prayers in a corner. It was Don Juan, the brother of Carlos, a gloomy and mysterious person, who spoke seldom and always in vague prophetic terms, —

"And ever gazed beyond the horizon's line."

1 She had twice held a hand which turned to ice in her grasp. She was a virgin and yet a widow, — in mourning for two husbands.

2 A man in a helmet is worth two in a hat, four in a student's cap, twelve in a periwig, and twenty-four with the tonsure.

Don Juan was apparently indifferent to what went on around him. But, when the ceremony was over, he requested a moment's conversation with Don Carlos; and the two were left together. The monk then confessed his own love for Agnes, and that he had poisoned her two former lovers. Forbidden by his vows to aspire to her hand, he could not suffer her to belong to another man. He begged Don Carlos to give up the marriage; and, his prayer proving futile, the monk seized a sword suspended on the wall, turned back the sleeves of his frock, fought his rival and slew him briskly, after the manner of the romantic school, and subsequently killed himself, while Agnes went into a convent.

I need not say where the novice of seventeen found the subject, and whence he adopted the style of this performance. We detect the influence of the president of the Cénacle, and some of the verses need not have been disowned by the master himself. It should be observed that "Hernani" had not then seen the light, and that romantic Spain had but just been discovered by M. Merimée.

A tri-weekly journal of the narrowest dimensions was then appearing at Dijon, under the name of the "Provincial." Paul Foucher, who knew one of the editors, had published some of his own verses in this newspaper; and he proposed to submit to the same editor certain stanzas by another poet, as young and obscure as himself, who dared not as yet give his name. Sustained by Paul Foucher's recommendation, the youthful poet sent to the Dijon journal a ballad composed expressly for the "Provincial." This fragment, entitled "A Dream,"

appeared in the number for August 31, 1828, with no signature but the initials A. D. M. It was in the woods of Auteuil that the blond poet dreamed out this bit of pleasantry. Paul Foucher's editorial friend, in an introductory note of twenty lines, asked pardon of the readers of the "Provincial" for offering to them so excessively romantic a composition; but the editor-in-chief, M. Charles Brugnot, declared in a foot-note that this deprecatory preface was none of his, and that he had no favors to ask for a piece of fanciful writing, which he considered charming. The infant poet was already the subject of a controversy between the two editors, who quarrelled in the pages of their own journal. Alfred, however, was overjoyed to receive the number of the journal which contained his first printed verses. Many a time since then his thoughts have awakened the *groanings* of the press; but the modest Dijon newspaper, preserved with religious care, has always held an honorable place among his papers.

At the close of the year 1828, the literary war was becoming livelier day by day. The louder the classical camp cried "barbarism," the more audacious did the romanticists become. Happy time, when men were ready to fight for a sonnet, a fugitive verse, or a hemistich! Like a soldier who sees his friends rushing into action, Alfred felt possessed by the longing to try his strength. One morning he went and awoke M. Sainte-Beuve with the laughing announcement, "I have been making verses too!" M. Sainte-Beuve was not the man to make a mistake about the worth of these attempts, and the future reserved for their author. A

few days later, he wrote to one of his friends, "We have a child of genius among us." Alfred now determined to have his pieces read at the Cénacle. The elegy was a good deal applauded, but the poem of "Agnes" excited positive enthusiasm. The immense difference in style and movement between these two works could not fail to be remarked by so intelligent an audience. This versatility of talent gave the highest possible idea of the powers of the new recruit to the phalanx. It might have been foreseen that it would be impossible for him to serve long under any banner whatever, and that he would soon break ranks and follow his own fancy; but, as yet, nobody dreamed of that. Among other good traits, the members of the Cénacle had this admirable quality, that they knew not envy, and never stinted their praise of young aspirants. Alfred was welcomed on all sides.

But, despite these encouragements, the *débutant* would not yet allow that he was a poet. "If I were to mount the scaffold to-morrow," he said to his brother, "I might well strike my forehead, and repeat the words of André Chenier, 'I feel that I had something here'; but they are doing me poor service by assuring me that I am a great man. The public and posterity alone can confer that rank."

In order to have more verses to recite to his friends, he composed successively "Le Lever," "L'Andalouse," "Charles Quint à Saint Just," "Don Paëz," "Les Marrons du Feu," and "Portia." Then came the "Ballade à la Lune;" yet no symptom was observed of a revolution in his ideas, and great was the amusement

excited by that carnival of wit. For even parodies were admitted by the Cénacle, and there was intolerance of nothing but classical works. No one dreamed that this lad had completely fathomed all the doctrines discussed in his hearing, and adopted an independent course ; and that he was neither to accept advice nor follow any model, from the day when, after deep reflection and long listening to the poetry of others, he uttered Correggio's cry, "I, too, am a poet!"

While his muse yet lured him to the woods of Auteuil, the age of manhood arrived. On his first appearance in society the winter before, women had paid no attention whatever to the little fellow, who conscientiously executed the steps which his dancing-master had taught him ; but a few months later, his figure developed, and he lost his boyish air and his timid bearing. His countenance assumed a remarkable expression of pride and assurance, and his glance became steady, and, at the same time, so inquisitive and piercing that it was not easy to meet. The first woman who detected the change was a lady of much talent ; a fine musician, coquettish, and satirical, but attacked by an incurable affection of the chest. To visit her in the country, whither she continually invited him by notes of prudent brevity, Alfred missed his *rendezvous* with the Muses, and traversed the sterile plain of Saint Denis. When he saw that this lady did not regard him quite the same as formerly, while still she affected to treat him like a child, the manœuvre amazed him. It was some time before he learned that advantage had been taken of his innocence, and that he had been made to play the part

of Fortunio. The lady was provided with a Clavaroche; but she had not the heart of Jacqueline. She remained insensible to the tender reproaches of the youth whom she cruelly mocked. He stopped his visits without betraying either anger or scorn. Another lady who had a fancy for him tried to console him; and when one morning I observed him in spurs, and a tall hat inclining to the right side, while a long lock of hair waved on the left, I perceived by these cavalier airs that his vanity was safe.

Seven years later the memory of his first adventure awoke, when Alfred de Musset thought himself taken in a similar snare. He was mistaken this time; but the transient suspicion produced the "Chandelier,"—in my opinion, his most perfect comedy, and one of the best productions of the French spirit since the days of Molière.

In the last days of 1828, as we were coming out of a ball-room, where Alfred had displayed a keen ardor of enjoyment, Prosper Chalas, editor of the "Temps" and the "Pandora," a clever fellow with some knowledge of mankind, seized my arm in the street, and whispered in my ear,—

"You may be sure that your brother is destined to become a great poet; but when I see his face, his delight in the pleasures of society, that air of his like that of an escaped colt, the looks which he gives women and the looks which they give him, I am afraid of the Delilahs for him."

The presentiment was realized. The Delilahs came, but they only made him the greater poet.

PART SECOND.

FROM 1829 TO 1836.

V.

BESIDE the danger hinted at by Prosper Chalas, Alfred de Musset had freely run all sorts of other risks at the age of eighteen, and his position was defined. He had been intimate with young folk who were richer than he, and he had wished to adopt their ways of life. The first tailors in Paris had alone the privilege of approaching his person, and he gave them employment. Horseback exercise was in fashion among his friends, and he hired horses. They played high, and so did he. They turned night into day, and he kept vigil. But he had a constitution like steel, and incredible cerebral activity; and he often wrote fifty verses after his return from a supper-party. That which would have been excess for many people was really only exercise for him. When I spoke to him of the perils of *bouillote*,[1] and of the terrible day when the tailor would bring in the bill for his new clothes, he replied: —

"Just because I am young I want to know every thing. I want to learn by experience and not by hearsay. I feel as if there were two men in me, — one acting, and the other observing. If the first does a silly thing, the other will profit by it. Sooner or later, please God, I will pay the tailor. I play, but I am not a gambler; and when I lose money, the lesson is worth all the reproofs in the world."

[1] A game at cards.

Occasionally, to be sure, he had sombre mornings and evenings of vain regret. On these days of wretchedness, the poet liked to compose a costume corresponding with the situation. Out of the depths of a closet he would drag an old yellow coachman's coat with six capes, large enough to go round him three times. Thus muffled, he would lie down upon the floor of his room, and hum in a lamentable voice some ancient air, contemporary with the coat. Whenever I found him in this penitential garment, and in a melodramatic attitude, I knew that the cards had proved intractable. The moment I opened my lips to address him, "Let me alone," he would say, covering up his face. "Leave me to my rags and my despair."

But when evening arrived he would put off his rags and don his finest clothes. The mere change of raiment sufficed to turn the current of his thoughts; and he would set forth on a tour of Parisian drawing-rooms, where the pleasures of the world caused him to forget his reverses at play. Either because a ball-room made a singular impression upon him, or owing to some peculiarity connected with his taste for painting, he remembered with astonishing accuracy the order in which the ladies had been seated, the colors and fashion of their dress, the way their hair was arranged. Moreover, luxury gave him a kind of intoxication. He admired bright lights, laces, and jewels, as a child admires them. To dance with a real marquise, in real diamonds, in a vast saloon as light as day, seemed to him the summit of bliss. He had the same childish admiration for people who make a show of any kind. He could forgive Alexander for

having burned Persepolis to amuse a courtesan. He liked Sylla because he was fortunate. Heliogabalus did not displease him at a distance in the robes of a priest of the Sun; and even Cæsar Borgia found some favor with him on the score of his mule shod with gold. I did not scruple to charge him with these weaknesses; and the best talks we ever had were when we quarrelled about such things, for he defended his bad cause admirably. I pause to note these details, because they belong to a period of three years only, in the career of one whose character was soon to change and become ennobled.

The winter of 1829 passed rapidly amid this complex life, in which, nevertheless, reading and study occupied a large place. The Muse now and then descended, taking him by surprise; but she was well received when she came. Among his pleasure-loving companions, Alfred was so fortunate as to find one true friend. Alfred Tattet, then making his first appearance in society, was exactly of the same age as himself. He was a lovable fellow and a very lively guest, regular in his devotions and extravagant in his language, finding every thing either entrancing or execrable; but yet keener after the pleasures of the mind than any others, and always ready to go into raptures over a fine verse. He easily obtained a sight of his friend's productions, and used to give little æsthetic evenings and *matinées* for the sake of hearing them read and re-read. There De Musset made the acquaintance of Olric Guttingeur, who one day took him to Havre and Honfleur. In consequence of a confidential conversation which they held

on this journey, Alfred wrote three stanzas which sufficed to immortalize the friend to whom they were addressed. The youngest disciple of the great Cénacle thus became the god of a Cénacle not yet known.

In the drawing-room of Achille Devéria, where he went a great deal, Alfred used to waltz alternately with two young girls of the same age; both very pretty and pleasing, equally ingenuous and great friends. He talked delightfully about fashions and dress and trinkets, and was as much a child as any of the three. He used to dilate regularly to each on the beauty and the graces of the other. On the morrow the maidens would exchange confidences, and they were somewhat scandalized not to be able to discover which he preferred. These drawing-room flirtations were renewed season after season, until they ended in an adventure which a few people must still remember. Gustave Planche, who was very discriminating in his antipathies, detested Alfred de Musset for no reason, but instinctively. Planche did not dance; but, from the corner where he was seated, he undertook one evening to depose that he had seen the indefatigable waltzer furtively kiss the shoulder of one of his partners. There was an immediate "Fie! fie!" and the young lady received orders to refuse to dance with her habitual partner. Alfred guessed, by the sorrowful looks of the victim, that she was acting under authority, and having done nothing amiss, he demanded an explanation so peremptorily that it was impossible to refuse. The malicious speech was traced to its source, and Planche attempted to deny it; but the matter was pressed, and he was at last obliged to confess. The

father's wrath was turned against him, and when the ball was over he waited for the calumniator and administered a sound caning. Planche learned the truth of the proverb, "Ill luck follows an ill-wisher;" and it may well be supposed that the adventure did not make him love any better the poet to whom he owed the lesson. The young girl's reputation was not to be affected by any such flurry, and it was to her that Alfred de Musset afterwards addressed the verses "To Pepa."

During this time, the collection of poems which was to bear the title of "Contes d'Espagne et Italie," was growing by degrees. That nothing may be omitted, we will note, in passing, a first publication which is very little known. At eighteen, Alfred was only too happy to translate from the English a small romance for the publisher M. Mame. He had adopted the simple title of "Le Mangeur d'Opium;" but the editor insisted on "L'Anglais, Mangeur d'Opium."[1] This little volume, of which it would probably be difficult to find a copy to-day, was prepared in a month. The translator was not very exact, and introduced into the reveries of the foreign hero some of the impressions which he had himself received from M. Bérard's lessons in descriptive anatomy. No notice was taken of this anonymous publication, and it disappeared in the flood of literary novelties, like a drop of water in the sea.

But now came a catastrophe of which the consequences were serious, and which troubled the poet deeply. One morning his father informed him that he had secured for him a clerk's place in one of the offices of M. Febvrel,

[1] The title of the original was "Confessions of an English Opium-eater."

who had just obtained, through sealed proposals, the contract for supplying the military posts with fuel. The poor boy dared not wink. He suffered himself to be fettered by the bureaucratic ball and chain. No very great assiduity was required of him ; but he daily felt the weight of his fetters in every respect save that of salary. Impelled at length by a frantic desire to regain his liberty, he called on a devoted publisher of the romantic school. Urbain Canel examined the manuscript of the "Contes d'Espagne," and declared that it lacked five hundred verses of the length suitable for an octavo volume, which was the regulation form of the new literature.

"Five hundred verses!" cried the poet. "I can soon give you those, if they will emancipate me!"

It was the season of vacations, and Alfred obtained from his employers a leave of three weeks. On the 27th of August, 1829, he set out for Mans, where his Uncle Desherbiers was then residing. He returned on the 19th of September,[1] and that very evening repeated to me the entire poem of "Mardoche," which contained almost six hundred verses, some of the most audacious of which had, however, to be suppressed. Urbain Canel was particularly charmed by the length of the piece, and sent it at once to the printer. The compositors worked at these poems of an unknown author only in their leisure moments, and the last proof-sheets did not come till near the end of the year. On the 24th of December, Alfred besought his father to give a party, and invite MM. Merimée, De Vigny, Emile and Antony Deschamps,

[1] I find these exact dates in his note-books.

Louis Boulanger, Victor Pavie, De la Rosière and Guttingeur. To them he recited "Don Päez," "Portia," and "Mardoche." Most of the invited guests were already acquainted with the first two poems; but the last named, for all its freedom of language, carried off the honors of the night. There was but one opinion about the infallible success which awaited these poems.

A few days later, there appeared, under the title of "Contes d'Espagne et Italie," a volume of 232 pages, of which but five hundred copies were printed.[1] The effect which it produced is well known; but it is curious to-day to re-read the journals of that time. Some of them flew into a perfect rage against both the book and its author. One condemns the exaggeration both of characters and language; another, on the other hand, praises the young poet for not abusing his privilege of hyperbole. An opposition journal inquired with admirable gravity: "Whence comes this preference of the rising generation for Spain and Italy, countries where freedom does not exist, and where religion is degraded by superstitious observances." At the same time, a pious royalist critic votes an indulgence to the unbridled Muse on account of the second canto of "Portia," where he has discovered an edifying description of the awe inspired by the majestic aspect of a Gothic church.

[1] The smallness of the edition is not remarkable. In those days nobody bought new books. They only praised them in their neighbors' studies. Those five hundred books obtained, in a few days, ten thousand readers. Between 1828 and 1840 the fashion of publication changed. The 18mo displaced the 8vo, and people bought the books which they desired to read.

The celebrated "Ballade à la Lune" became at once the subject of clamorous discussion. Those who were sternly resolved to take it seriously, considered themselves absolved by this specimen from reading the rest of the book. Others saw in it much more than the poet had meant, and would have it that he was ridiculing both his friends and himself. It must be confessed that, on this occasion, professional connoisseurs and respectable middle-aged men were not exactly the most intelligent judges. But while they gravely discussed, with more or less of good faith, the exact meaning of the "Ballade à la Lune," the poet had conquered the public whom he desired to please, — the young of both sexes.

Alfred soon had numbers of adventures to confide to me. Some were "Boccaccian," and some romantic; others had a spice of the dramatic. Several times, I was awakened in the middle of the night to give my serious opinion on some matter requiring the utmost prudence. All these anecdotes having been confided to me under the seal of secrecy, I forgot them as in duty bound; but I am able to affirm that they would have stricken with envy Bassompierre or Lauzun. The women of those days were not absorbed in luxury and the toilette. Young people who desired to please did not need to be rich. To have at nineteen the prestige of genius and fame sufficed for some things. But for all his success, Alfred de Musset had the modesty and good sense to resist intoxication. He was always on his guard against foolish pride and infatuation about himself, — a vulgar shoal, on which nevertheless some of the greatest minds have grounded.

While the *servum pecus* of imitators flung itself upon the "Contes d'Espagne," and made, as best they might, a hundred different attempts to copy them, Alfred de Musset himself was pondering a reform, and changed his pace so completely that, in the "Vœux Stériles," "Octave," and the "Pensées de Rafäel," — the first pieces which he published in the "Revue de Paris," after an interval of serious reflection, — we find no more irregular verses, no trace of carelessness in style. We know that the poet asked forgiveness of his mother-tongue for having sometimes offended her. He said that Racine and Shakspeare met upon his table Boileau, who had forgiven them; and though he boasted of making his Muse walk bare-foot, like truth, the classicists might have supposed her shod with the golden buskin. They might well have congratulated themselves on an apology, so gracefully uttered; but they pretended not to have heard it, and came back to the "dot of the i,"[1] like Molière's marquis in his refrain of "cream tarts." At this epoch, the romanticists, wounded by Raphael's profession of faith, complained of desertion, and did not fail to say that the poet of the "Contes d'Espagne" had deteriorated, and was not fulfilling his early promise. Alfred de Musset suddenly found himself alone, all parties having turned against him; but he was young, and proud as Œdipus, and literary differ-

[1] Musset, in his famous "Ballad to the Moon," fantastically compares the planet, hanging above a pointed spire, to the dot over an i, —

"C'était dans la nuit brune,
Sur le clocher jaune:
La lune,
Comme un point sur un i," &c. — TR.

ences did not prevent friendly intercourse. He did not go as often as formerly to the Cénacle; but he met his old friends at the receptions of Achille Devéria, and at the Arsenal with good Nodier, who loved him devotedly.

But Alfred had obtained leave to resign his place; and the day on which he did so had been one of the happiest of his life. That his father might have no anxiety about the consequences of this rash step, he undertook to produce something more lucrative than poetry; and with this intent he composed a little dramatic piece in three tableaux, entitled "La Quittance du Diable." Each tableau was accompanied by a recitation in verse. It was a mere scintillation of fancy, yet not without originality. With the assistance of a musician of talent, he might have made of it a comic opera, which would have been as taking as many others. The piece was offered to the theatre of the "Nouveautés," where all kinds of things were played, and it was accepted; and some steps must have been taken towards its representation, for the distribution of characters is written out on the cover of the manuscript, in the manager's hand. M. Bouffet and Mme. Albert were to take the two principal parts, and they were the best artists in the company. I do not know what prevented the representation; but probably it was the Revolution of July, which broke out while the leader of the orchestra was arranging the music for the scenes. However that may have been, the author withdrew the piece, and consigned it to the portfolio where it still remains.

After the crisis of the 7th of August, Alfred de

Musset, who feared nothing so much as a public office, remained a passive spectator of the rush for places. Selfish congratulations poured from all quarters into the palace; but he allowed himself to forget his old school-fellow, now become Duc d'Orléans. The gravity of the political prospect, and the counter-strokes of revolution in the north and south of Europe, did not suffice to arrest the literary movement, begun under the fallen dynasty. The general intellectual fermentation seemed to have turned to the advantage of letters. During the four years of the new régime, a generation of writers arose who have not yet been superseded. In the autumn of 1830, the theatres, less restricted now than ever before, seized upon a subject which had been forbidden under the previous government; namely, the epopee of the Empire. Napoleon appeared upon every stage, even the most obscure. Harel, the enterprising director of the Odéon, brought out in superb style a drama of this kind, the principal part in which was given to Frédéric Le Maître; and, to fill a void in his repertory, the same manager requested the author of the "Contes d'Espagne et Italie" to furnish him a piece as novel and audacious as possible. The manuscript of the "Nuit Vénitienne" was the result, and M. Harel appeared enchanted with it. The piece was carefully mounted, committed to memory in a few days, and announced as a godsend. M. Lockroy took the part of the Prince; Vizentini, a capital actor, played the comic character; an actress of moderate gifts, but extremely pretty, played Laurette; and M. Lafosse, Razetta.

The first performance took place on Wednesday, Dec.

1, 1830. I do not know the character of the audience; but in the second scene, which is nevertheless extremely lively, Vizentini found himself interrupted by hisses. Furious cries drowned the voices of the actors, and the pit had paroxysms at all the finest points in the dialogue, as though it had gone with the full intention of hearing nothing. The author was confounded by the uproar, and could not believe but that the piece would recover itself during the great scene between the Prince of Eisenach and Laurette. Mlle. Béranger, beautifully dressed in white satin, was resplendent in freshness and beauty, and for a moment the gigglers were actually silenced. Unhappily, the actress, in looking from her balcony to see if the jealous Razetta were still at his post, had to lean against a green trellis, the paint of which was not dry, and she turned toward the public with a robe all crossed with green squares, from the girdle to the hem. This time the disheartened author succumbed to his ill-luck; and the scene between the Prince and Laurette was fairly smothered in the yells of the audience. All the charming wit by which the young "Vénitienne" allows herself to be cajoled, passed unheeded. In that scene, there is one remark quoted from a letter of Lovelace to Belford. I hoped that this passage would conciliate the malcontents; but it did not. Richardson was hooted like all the rest. Harel, convinced that all this tumult was deliberately planned, insisted upon a second trial. The fatal trellis was removed, Mlle. Béranger wore a new gown, and the author besought M. Lockroy to add these words, after the quotation from Richardson, "as Lovelace says." But all

was vain. The piece had almost precisely the same reception as at first, and the name of Lovelace was greeted by an ignorant and senseless titter. When the storm was at its height, the author cried out, "I would never have believed that there was material in Paris for so stupid an audience." Prosper Chalas wrote him the next day, and asked whether he proposed to throw himself to the beasts that evening, and he replied, "No, I have said farewell to the menagerie for one while."

The consequences of this sad mishap were incalculable. Disgusted by a rebuff of which he keenly felt the cruelty and injustice, Alfred de Musset wrote no more with a view to stage representation. If the public had awarded to the young author of twenty the consideration which was his due, how many more dramatic pieces might have followed this first attempt! His glorious revenge of the "Caprice" was not taken until seventeen years after this mortifying evening. Who can say how the theatre would have stood to-day if a handful of Bœotians had not alienated from it, for so many years, the only writer capable of arresting the decline of the dramatic art. Possibly that class of literature which, since the reign of Louis XIV., has always held the foremost rank in France, might have escaped the reproach of declining to a manufacture. The public has only itself to thank for the pleasure which it has lost.

Loève-Veimars, in the "Temps," had the courage to chide the Odéon pit for the brutality of its behavior. The young author was grateful, and paid a visit to Loève-Veimars, during which he was presented to

Jacques Coste, chief editor of the "Temps." The latter, by way of experiment, requested the author of the "Contes d'Espagne" to furnish him a few fanciful articles, and allowed him *carte blanche*. From Jan. 10, to the close of May, 1831, there appeared quite regularly every Monday a series of anonymous articles under the head of "Revue Fantastique," where Alfred treated such subjects as occurred to him. That of "Pantagruel, the Constitutional King," was remarkably opportune, and had a great success. But, though truly modest, the poet had too much independence long to submit to any species of slavery. He wearied of journalism, and his reviews soon ceased to appear.

Under the pretext of acquiring experience, he was leading a somewhat dissipated life. Young people of fashion used then to spend their evenings at the Café de Paris, and parties of pleasure were organized there on an extensive scale. They would set off at midnight in post-chaises for Enghien or Morfontaine. They laid extravagant bets, which created public excitement, and Alfred de Musset bore his part in all this nonsense. Occasions for more moderate pleasure also came to him. The *unforeseen*, for which he had a somewhat pagan veneration, reserved for him sundry special favors. Often bewildered by the choice offered him, he neglected a more obvious for a more doubtful pleasure, — for a simple card-party at his neighbor's the Marquis of Belmont, an informal visit, a cigar, a chat with a friend, or for nothing whatever. He found it extremely pleasant to stay at home and reflect that he might be enjoying himself abroad if he liked. His study was to him

a haunt of delight, and there we often talked till three o'clock in the morning. Or sometimes the framing of an engraving purchased on the quays demanded our serious consideration; and, on such days, ours was an animated interior, and our family meals were as gay as possible.

Among those freaks of chance which the poet loved to regard with a whimsical reverence, there was one which deserves to be reported. Mme. La Duchesse de Castries wanted to read the "Contes d'Espagne," and ordered her companion, who was an Englishwoman, to buy a copy. Miss —— was not very well acquainted with the ways of the world, and knew no better than to write to the author the following note: —

"MONSIEUR, — A young English lady, wishing to read your poems, addresses herself immediately to you to obtain them. If you will send them to her, she will be deeply obliged."

This note, legibly signed and bearing the young lady's address, remained for a long time open upon a table, in company with others equally impertinent. One morning, however, Alfred read it over, and wrote the following reply: —

"MADEMOISELLE, — All young English ladies are pretty, and I shall not wrong you by fancying you an exception to the general rule. Since, therefore, you have freely confided to me your name and address, do not be surprised if I claim the privilege of offering to you in person the poems which you desire to read."

Poor Miss —— was terribly embarrassed. She ran to the duchess and confessed her blunder, and showed her

the cavalier reply which her imprudence had drawn forth. Mme. de Castries comforted her, and told her to await with composure the proposed call. Alfred de Musset soon came with his book under his arm. The *valet de chambre* had had his orders, and conducted him to the drawing-room, where the duchess received him most graciously and invited him to sit down. She then explained smilingly the mistake of her companion. "There is no reason," she said, "why you should be deprived of the pleasure of seeing this young English girl, and I will presently introduce you; but you must begin by making my own acquaintance."

Thereupon, they began to talk. Alfred knew perfectly well that the Duchesse de Castries was one of the most agreeable women in Paris. He, therefore, put a good face on the matter, accepted the situation merrily, and determined to shine; and the result was that the acquaintance, thus begun, ended in a life-long friendship.

VI.

IT has been said of the author of the "Contes d'Espagne" that all he lacked in his various enterprises was good advice. I would have liked to see the honorable counsellors bringing their budget of maxims to that eager spirit, who knew much more about them than the old masters themselves, and who never treated a literary question, either in conversation or in writing, without improvising a whole art of poetry, full of genuine novelties. Nothing certainly would have been easier than to convince him that his verses were bad; but he would have flung them into the fire, and there would have been no gain. Advice about his way of life he never lacked. But it would have been a fine thing to hear reasonable people lecture this Fantasio, who even while he gave loose rein to his passions, yet scrutinized and studied himself so carefully that his fancy far outran all representations which could be made to him. Nothing but time, experience, and reflection can change the character of a poet's genius; and, if reflection can abridge time, never did poet advance faster than he of whom we speak.

His experience with the public had been enough to make Alfred de Musset resolve to reform his *manner*. Nor was this merely an affair of prosody and versification. A revolution far more important was in progress in his ideas and the character of his mind. He pro-

duced very little in the years 1830 and 1831; but he read and reflected much, and he lived more perhaps than is needful for a poet. One evening, in the month of October, I found him sitting moodily with his head in his hands, and I asked him what he was thinking of.

"I am thinking," he replied, "that I am approaching my majority. Two months from to-day, I shall be twenty-one; and that is a great age. Do I need to visit so many men, and chatter with so many women, in order to know mankind? Have I not already seen enough to have much to say, supposing that I am capable of saying any thing? Either we have nothing in us, and our sensations have no effect upon our minds; or we have the elements of all things in us, and then we only need see a little in order to divine the whole. And still I feel that I lack something, I don't know what. Is it a great love? Is it a great sorrow? Both perhaps. But I dare not crave that sort of enlightenment. Experience is a good thing, provided it does not kill you."

As if he scented in the air something which he dreaded, he formed schemes for retirement and hard work. He tried regularly to apportion his day. That he might be sure of quiet recreation, he took a season-ticket to the opera for six months. Sometimes he passed the time of the performance in a stage-box, where he met friends. Sometimes he retired alone to a remote corner, and gladly allowed the music to excite his imagination. Under this sort of stimulus, he composed the "Saule," the longest and most serious poem which he had yet written, and which represents what we call,

in the work of a painter, a period of transition. I have elsewhere described the grotesque destiny of this poem.[1]

The winter opened with gloomy auspices. The cholera, which had been stayed for a short time in Poland, had just appeared in the north of Germany. One morning we learned that it had leaped with a single bound to London, and presently the tidings spread that it had broken out in Paris. The whole aspect of the city was changed. One could not stir abroad without meeting hundreds of hearses. In the evening, the deserted streets, lighted at long intervals by the red lanterns of the ambulances, the closed shops, the silence, the few panic-stricken passers-by who were hurrying for help, all revealed the presence of the scourge; and every morning the number of the dead increased. Immense removal-carts encountered at every door one or more biers, sometimes but half constructed. If the corpse was not ready, the overworked agents complained of being made to wait, and quarrelled with relatives and servants. Since the days of the plague in the reign of Charles V., nothing like it had been known in Paris.

Our father was then suffering from an attack of the gout. On the 7th of April, when the physician questioned him, we observed his countenance change. He did not mention the pestilence, but the prescriptions which he ordered were enough. At nine o'clock in the evening, cholera declared itself with frightful violence, and at six in the morning all was over. Our consterna-

[1] See a brief notice of the life of Alfred de Musset, in the quarto edition of his works, published by subscription in 1866. Paris: M. Charpentier.

tion was so great that we did not at first measure the consequences of this great misfortune. I had seen my brother shed tears over disappointments in love; but now his grief was quieter because deeper, and he was mute. "This," said he, "is one of those tearless troubles which are never assuaged, the memory of which will always keep its first horror and bitterness. Death strikes us otherwise than love."

Before examining the state of our father's affairs, it seemed evident to us that, if the emoluments of a fine office were subtracted from the family income, our position must necessarily be changed. It did not prove so. Unexpected resources appeared; but their extent was yet uncertain, when my brother confided to me a resolution which will perhaps appear incredible to-day.

"Without comfort," said he to me one evening, "there can be no leisure, and without leisure no poetry. I must stop playing the spoiled child, and toying with a vocation which is not a career. It is time for me to think and act like a man. The notion of being a burden on the best of mothers, or of prejudicing the future of a sister whom we adore, and who will need a dowry in ten years, is revolting to me. I shall put the affection of those whom I love best to no such test; and this is what I have determined to do. I shall make a last literary experiment with a volume of verses which will be better than the first. If the publication of this work does not bring me in as much as I expect, I shall enlist in Chartres' hussars, or in a regiment of lancers along with my old comrade the Prince of Echmühl. The uniform will be very becoming. I am young and in good health. I like horseback riding; and,

with the influence which I can bring to bear, the devil is in it if I do not become an officer."

Considering the necessary delay, I was not overpowered by terror at this resolution. There was no prospect of immediate want at home. Alfred began his work, and it was not from work that I desired to dissuade him. The plan of the poem was suggested by that Oriental proverb of whose truth he was destined to have sorrowful experience, "Between the cup and the lip, there is room for a misfortune." He supposed himself obliged to work, and delighted to repeat that necessity is a muse whom courage can idealize. Sustained by the idea that this attempt would be his last, he felt perfectly free in his mind; and, when he was satisfied with his day's work, he used to rub his hands and say: "I am not a soldier yet."

With no more information about the Tyrol than could be derived from the old geographical dictionary of La Martinière, he did not hesitate to lay the scene of "La Coupe et les Lèvres" in that unknown country, and he proved thereby that "the poet has within himself the elements of all things." This dramatic poem, which contains more than sixteen hundred verses, was finished in the course of the summer; and the author then read it aloud to his friend Alfred Tattet. During the autumn, he also wrote the comedy, "À quoi rêvent les jeunes Filles." Two sisters full of wit and grace whom he had known at Mans, and whom he called his first partners, served him as the models of those two charming figures, Ninette and Ninon.

It was I who undertook to offer to the publisher Ren-

duel this volume, whose title, "Un Spectacle dans un Fauteuil," was suggested by the remembrance of that tumultuous night at the Odéon. Renduel seemed in no haste to conclude the bargain. Poetry, he said, was not a salable commodity, while prose sold like bread. Fortunately I myself had just engaged in bread-making; and, out of regard to me, Renduel consented to trade in the less popular form of food. The MS. was in the hands of the compositors, and the proofs were coming, when there was added at the foot of the page an exclamation of alarm, "More copy! more copy!" The publisher added, "There are but 203 pages, and we must have 300, or the volume will not be presentable."

The author set to work again. He wrote "Namouna" yet more expeditiously than he had written "Mardoche." Even then there were but 288 pages; but the article being rhymed, and consequently of the second class, the publisher was content with the smaller quantity. Alfred then assembled his friends, and made them listen to "La Coupe et les Lèvres," and the comedy "À quoi rêvent les jeunes Filles." The audience consisted of the very persons who had applauded the "Contes d'Espagne" three years before; but what a difference! He was heard in sombre silence. Was it admiration, shock, surprise, or dissatisfaction? I do not know. I only know that the *séance* was perfectly glacial, and that the publisher was in despair. M. Merimée alone drew near the author and said in a subdued tone: "You have made an enormous advance. The little comedy, especially, pleases me very much." The book appeared before the end of the year, but with the date 1833. It

did not create nearly as great a sensation as the "Contes d'Espagne;" but most fortunately the author had heard, the very day after it was offered for sale, two young men who were walking before him on the Boulevard de Gand laughingly repeat this verse from the part of Irus, —

"Spadille a l'air de oie, et Quinola d'un cuistre."[1]

And this trivial circumstance, made him feel entirely satisfied. The journals were apparently somewhat afraid to reverse their previous judgments; but at length M. Sainte-Beuve, who himself owed no apology to the author of the "Contes d'Espagne," succeeded in attaching the bell. In the "Revue des Deux Mondes," for Jan. 15, 1833, he published an article in which the new volume of poems was compared with the first, progress noted, and the beauties of the two works illustrated, with that absolute correctness of eye, that skill in thoroughly searching and fathoming a subject and throwing its most delicate shades into relief, which make criticism, when sustained by disinterestedness and good faith, a truly fine and useful art. M. Sainte-Beuve quoted from both volumes passages with which he was peculiarly struck, and then added: "To my mind these verses have a poetical quality, the equal of which in its own way is not to be found in all the works of any one of a large number of estimable people whose verses have brought them to the Academy, — M. Casimir Delavigne himself, if you will. Images like these are found, not elaborated. I could cite at least a hundred as good, of which all plagiarists, manufacturers, verbal critics, and people of taste, are invited to partake."

[1] "Spadille looks like a goose, and Quinola like a fag."

One likes to see criticism turn animated and forget itself, cast aside its judge's cap in a moment of enthusiasm, and push to the verge of imprudence its disregard of consequences. At the close of his article, M. Sainte-Beuve delicately reminded his readers that he was a poet himself, by remarking that Marlowe and Rotrou, on the appearance of Shakspeare and Corneille, were saved from sorrow by admiration.

The example thus deliberately set by M. Sainte-Beuve found but few imitators. Articles appeared at long intervals. People were pretty generally agreed about the merit of the portrait of Don Juan in "Namouna." There was no longer any thought of denying talent; but it was still possible to dispute originality. Every thing is like something else. Criticism fell back on the accusation, so often repeated since and with so little discernment, of having imitated Lord Byron and other poets whom my brother resembled but slightly. On this point, the author had well defended himself in the very dedication of the book thus criticised. This dedication contained a passage in which the doctrines of the romanticists, and the mania for curious rhymes, were sharply attacked. But it made no difference; and the poet had flung at his head the names of Byron, Victor Hugo, La Fontaine, and Mathurin Regnier. In point of fact, a man who could have imitated successfully so many poets, differing so widely among themselves, must have come near originality. It would seem as if three years of intimate association with a mind as firmly tempered as that of M. Victor Hugo ought to have exercised some influence over a young *débutant;*

but there was no trace of any such influence in the volume then in the hands of the critics.

As for Lord Byron, everybody imitated him in the sense that all contemporary poets heard his strains with emotion, and found echoes of the same awakened in their own souls. If Alfred de Musset responded to him better than the rest, it was because of a greater similarity of sentiment and life-experience between him and the English poet. On certain sides, in fact, these two fine organizations strongly resemble one another. They sacrifice to the same gods, and offer, "for incense, love and grief and melody; for a victim, the poet's heart." Both liked to represent themselves in their fictitious creations, because this was the only method which made it possible for the poet's heart to beat under the drapery of the character. In this respect, neither imitated the other; but they met upon ground which Dante, Shakspeare, Molière, La Fontaine, and many others, had traversed before them.

Can it be necessary now to say that, if Alfred de Musset studied Mathurin Regnier as well as Fontaine, it was for the purpose of fathoming the true genius of our language, and defending himself against that influx of English and Germanic elements which was inundating the new literature? Seriously, to imitate Regnier would have been to do him too much honor. What he liked in the old satiric poet, was his frankness; and he had the best of reasons for setting a high value on that Gallic quality, for he possessed it himself, and owed to it a large part of his power and influence.

Another reproach in which several of his critics

united, and which it is now curious to recall, was this: "The poet of 'Namouna,'" said one, "has no convictions about any thing. What sort of a man is he? What are the objects of his worship? Whence does he come, and whither is he tending? In times as serious as the present, how can he practise art merely for his own amusement? The moment is ill chosen for these free-and-easy airs about all which troubles and disquiets humanity. If he believes in any thing, let him say so; otherwise, he is of no account in our generation. He is but a poetical amateur." This reproof becomes positively comical when we reflect that the author of "Namouna" is precisely the only poet whose doubts and anguish, and yearnings toward the infinite and the divine, fairly represent the most secret history of the human heart in this age of scepticism. M. Sainte-Beuve, more sagacious than the rest, began by expressing his own bewilderment about the meaning of a work which appeared full of inconsistencies; but, when he had succeeded in analyzing the great figure of Don Juan, he exclaimed: "If I have said that this work lacks unity, I retract the saying. Unity — the difficult and impalpable — is here collected like a beam of light, and falls full and with magic effect upon the countenance in question. This is the object of idolatry."

And yet it was a unity whereof only glimpses were obtained by clairvoyant spirits. It is not discernible in any isolated poem, nor even in any one volume; but it is to be found to-day in the complete works of the poet. For the fifteen years between 1830 and 1845, — that is to say, from the "Contes d'Espagne" to "Il faut qu'une Porte

soit Ouverte ou Fermée,"—his last contribution to the portraiture of our society, short-sighted people never ceased to reiterate on the occasion of every new book by Alfred de Musset: "Who is this man, and whither is he tending?" To which he might have replied: "I am going where my age is going, where we are all going, where you are going yourselves, although you may not know it." But he said nothing, and that was better still.

It may readily be supposed that Alfred abandoned the idea of enlisting in De Chartres' hussars, notwithstanding the handsome uniform of that distinguished corps. That public composed of the young of both sexes which he had desired to please, had responded to his appeal. It was not precisely for that public that he deliberately undertook the immensely difficult task of composing a poem in stanzas of six consecutive rhymes. But his more serious object was attained. Shortly after the publication of M. Sainte-Beuve's article, the chief editor of the "Revue des Deux Mondes" engaged the assistance of Alfred de Musset. This publication, founded subsequently to the "Revue de Paris," had just begun, in 1831, to appear twice a month. It had a formidable opposition to encounter, and its fortune to make. The young poet promised to contribute as much as he could; and the reader will allow that the review suffered nothing at his hands, for all that he wrote appeared there.

On the 1st of April, 1833, Alfred de Musset made his first appearance in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," by the publication of "André del Sarto." The subject of this drama had been suggested to him by

the brief notices which accompany the engravings in the "Musée Filhol," a favorite book of his, which he was perpetually conning. When he came to throw himself into the characters of the Florentine artists of the Renascence, he conceived a strong desire to visit Italy. He wanted, he said, to imitate the author of the "Histoire des Croisades" who, after his work was complete, went to the Holy Land to see what sort of places they really were which he had described.

After an interval of six weeks, "André del Sarto" was followed by the "Caprices de Marianne," the two acts of which were thrown off in a kind of juvenile transport, the logic of emotion supplying the place of a formal plan. When he came to the famous bottle scene, and had put into Marianne's mouth the tirade in which she taunts the young libertine with having lips more dainty than his heart, and with knowing more of beverages than of women, the author stopped short for a while as though stupefied by the force of his own reasoning. "It isn't to be supposed," said he, "that I am to be beaten myself by that little prude;" and, after a few moments of reflection, he conceived the triumphant reply of Octave. Now that this comedy is fully accredited, both as a reading and acting piece, it is played, but no longer judged. The first person who saw the printed proofs was a little startled by it; nor is this very wonderful. It was like nothing else whatsoever, — an impassioned subject impregnated with the very quintessence of wit and fancy. The fragment was inserted in the "Revue" without alteration, but not without apprehension. It was, however, the last instance of

any thing like hesitation; and every thing else which the new poet offered to the "Revue des Deux Mondes" was accepted forthwith. I ought also to add that, when his admission to the editorial staff of the magazine awakened jealousy, and was made the occasion of recrimination, the editor-in-chief undertook his defence, and insisted upon retaining him, with a firmness which he was obliged to push to the verge of obstinacy. All who ever knew Alfred de Musset realize how like he was both to Octave and Cœlio, although these two characters appear the very antipodes of one another. Nowhere but in himself did he find that humor, that inexhaustible merriment, that careless raillery, which vivify the scenes between Octave and Marianne. That the author had such a side may readily be conceived; but to understand that the same man reappears in Cœlio, with all his sustained passion, and the sad and sweet exaltation of mind characteristic of the timid lover, one must remember that love has a transforming power. Once in love, Alfred passed directly from the former to the latter character. Nor is it by any means incredible. For the pangs which our friends endure when in love, we are readily consoled: we bear them like philosophers; but our own are no laughing matter, and our sufferings from them are very real. Once we were Octave, but now we are Cœlio. For the noble and tender figure of Hermia, the author had not far to seek. He had his model before his very eyes in the person of our mother, always intent on sparing him trouble, or adding something to his comfort. As for Marianne, when I asked him where he found her, he answered:

"Nowhere and everywhere. She is woman, not *a* woman."

One morning after the publication of the "Caprices de Marianne," Alfred was at a breakfast at the house of Mme. Tattet, the mother of his friend. MM. Sainte-Beuve, Antony Deschamps, Ulric Guttinguer, and several other distinguished literary men were present. The mistress of the house was asking Alfred about the health of his mother and sister, and he replied: "I suppose that they are well, but I must confess that I have not seen them for twenty-four hours." He was rallied on this answer, and submitted to the reproaches of his friends about his way of life; but insisted, in self-defence, that he had some very serious ideas in his head. At dessert he was asked for some verses, and recited the first part of an unpublished poem. It was "Rolla," about which he had as yet said nothing to any one but his brother. The company welcomed the poem with transports of delight, and the author had the good taste not to revert to their late friendly remonstrances. He knew that he was justified.

"Rolla" appeared in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," Aug. 16, 1833. The next day, as Alfred de Musset was going in to the opera, he flung away a cigar on the steps of the theatre, and then saw a young man who was following him stoop instantly, pick up the fragment, and carefully wrap it in paper. He has told me a great many times that no compliment, or badge of reward, or distinction, ever touched his heart like that simple testimonial of sympathy and admiration.

At this period, Alfred met for the first time a person

who was destined to exercise a considerable influence over his life, and leave a deep impression on his works. It was at a great dinner given to the editors of the "Revue" at the Frères Provençaux. The guests were many, and among them there was one woman, next whom Alfred sat at table. She simply and pleasantly invited him to call on her; and, after going two or three times at intervals of a week, he became a constant guest. Some of his intimate friends were also on familiar terms there, and among them Gustave Planche. This cynical individual, who had neither tact nor good sense, had usurped a position which rendered him very annoying. He assumed airs of familiarity to which he had no sort of right, took the tone of a master, and affected an ease which the mistress of the house endured, out of weakness and good-nature, but with concealed impatience, as Mme. D'Epinay endured Duclos. Alfred, who knew Planche thoroughly, advised him to alter his manner. Planche pretended not to understand the hint, and it became necessary to be more explicit about the estimation in which he was held. Instead of changing his tone, he retired furious, and bore my brother an inextinguishable grudge ever after.

The *salon* from which Gustave Planche withdrew into exile lost nothing by his departure. Conversation never languished there, and it was a scene of reckless gayety. I have never seen so lively a circle, or one which cared so little for the rest of the world. There were chat, and sketching, and music. On certain days, the company disguised themselves and played different parts. They met in little committees and invented all manner of en-

tertainments, less through dread of *ennui* than overflow of animal spirits. One day they took it into their heads to give an æsthetic dinner, with a tinge of politics and philosophy. The invited guests were certain editors of the "Revue," and, among others, Lerminier the professor of philosophy. In order to provide him with a suitable companion, they invited Debureau, the incomparable Pierrot of the "Funambules." Debureau, who was usually seen clothed in white and powdered with flour, put on for the occasion a black coat, a shirt with a very full ruffle, a stiff starched cravat, pumps, and tight gloves. He was ordered to personate a distinguished member of the English House of Commons, passing through France on his way to Austria, with extremely secret instructions from Lord Grey. When they were in full swing, Alfred wanted a part assigned him, and adopted that of a young supplementary servant-girl, freshly arrived from Normandy. He donned the peasant woman's short petticoat, ribbed stockings, short sleeves, and cross suspended from the neck. His rosy cheeks and blonde hair corresponded with this picturesque costume; and when he had shaved off his moustache he looked like a fine slip of a girl, not too clever.

On the day appointed the guests arrived, to the number, if I remember rightly, of seven or eight. Debureau, as became so considerable a personage, arrived fifteen minutes later than the hour named. The guests were presented to him, and he responded to their salutations by slight bows, after which he planted himself before the fireplace, where he stood, stiff as a statue, with his hands behind his back, in glum silence. There was great

curiosity to see the author of "Rolla;" but at half-past six, Alfred de Musset had not arrived, and they sat down at table, leaving his place vacant. The place of honor was assigned to the Englishman, who opened his mouth only to eat and drink, but that largely. Nobody recognized Pierrot. In order to give him free play, and Lerminier a chance to display his knowledge, they turned the conversation upon politics. But vain were all allusions to Robert Peel, Lord Stanley, and the other renowned statesmen of Great Britain. The foreign diplomat replied only in monosyllables. At last, however, somebody used the phrase, "the equilibrium of Europe;" whereupon the Englishman waved his hand as if about to speak.

"Would you like to know," said he, "what I understand by 'the equilibrium of Europe,' in the present portentous state of English and continental politics? Observe me. I will illustrate."

The diplomat took a plate, flung it into the air with a rotary motion, and then caught it adroitly on the point of his knife, where it continued to spin, but kept its balance to the great admiration of the spectators. "There," said Debureau, "is an emblem of European equilibrium. There is no security elsewhere."

A universal peal of laughter succeeded, and it was redoubled when the hostess had named Debureau. But the young girl from Caux, whose taking ways had been remarked by some of the guests, did nothing but blunder from the commencement of the dinner. She dropped whatever she touched, put the plates upon the table wrong side up; brought a knife when a fork was re-

quested, and *vice versâ*. The reproofs of her mistress appeared to embarrass her, and increase her awkwardness. At the moment, however, when the Englishman gave such energetic expression to his views on the balance of power, the young waitress, the better to testify her participation in the general hilarity, seized a carafe as though she would drain it, and then poured the water upon the head of Lerminier, who began to swear at the pestiferous *Normande*. Alfred then took his place at table, still in his peasant costume, and partook of his share of the dinner which he had served so ill. The reader can guess whether the remainder of the evening was lively. The story made so much noise at the time that a good many Parisians still remember it.

The same individuals will perhaps recall an almost forgotten writer by the name of Chaudesaigues who was then attempting literary criticism in the "Revue de Paris," and some other journals. Having neither much talent nor much influence, he was a little envious and too simple to conceal the fact. He was a tall, pale youth, with a face like the pictures of Christ, and he stammered in talking. One day he came to make a call in the drawing-room where Debureau had figured as a diplomat. Near him in an arm-chair Chaudesaigues saw a fair-complexioned young man, who spoke never a word, but left the talk to him. He began an exceedingly knowing criticism of "Rolla," "Namouna," and the rest, without a suspicion of the general enthusiasm about verses which he himself could barely tolerate. The blonde youth smiled encouragement, seconded all his

remarks, and accompanied with nods of approbation the discourse of the iconoclast. Thus supported, Chaudesaigues was proceeding to personal criticism, when the mistress of the house abruptly interrupted him with, "I have the honor of presenting to you M. Alfred de Musset, whose acquaintance I have long wished you to make."

Chaudesaigues stammered, seized his hat, and rushed for the door, amid irrepressible laughter. But he was a better fellow than Gustave Planche. He returned and begged pardon for his offence, when he might justly have complained that a malicious trick had been played upon himself. They gave him the right hand of fellowship and he was admitted to a *coterie* where he continued to afford amusement by further blunders.

It would seem as if a relation which insured so merry a life, where talent, wit, grace, youth, and good-humor were thrown into a common stock, ought never to have been dissolved. Especially would it seem as if people who were so happy could not have done better than remain in an establishment which they had succeeded in rendering so attractive to themselves and others. But no: unrest, the foe of all well-being, and an incomprehensible turbulence of spirit seized upon them, and they began to pine for a wider sphere than a small *salon* in the first city of the world. That city became in their eyes no better than a heap of crumbling, smoking ruins, from which they must needs escape. They essayed at first an excursion to Fontainebleau; but it did not suffice, and as winter approached

they talked of Italy. Their talk soon resolved itself into a scheme of travel, and the project became a fixed idea.[1]

[1] It can hardly be necessary to say that M. Paul de Musset here describes, with a somewhat superfluous air of mystery, the beginning of the too famous relation between Alfred de Musset and George Sand. — Tr.

VII.

ALFRED DE MUSSET felt that his Italian journey must remain but a half-formed purpose until he had obtained his mother's consent. One morning, at the family breakfast he appeared preoccupied. I knew what was on his mind, and was hardly less agitated than he. On rising from the table, he sauntered about with an air of hesitation. At last he plucked up courage, and made a cautious official announcement of his intentions, adding that his plans were subject to his mother's approbation. His request was received like a piece of undeniably bad news. "Never," said our mother, "will I give my consent to a journey which I regard as a dangerous and fatal thing. I know that my opposition will be overruled, and that you will go; but it will be against my wishes and without my sanction."

For a short time, he hoped to overcome this resistance by explaining on what conditions the trip was to be made; but, when he saw that his pertinacity served but to excite a flood of tears, he immediately altered his determination and sacrificed his project. "Reassure yourself," he said to his mother, "I will not go. If it is absolutely necessary that somebody should weep, it shall not be you."

And he actually went out to countermand the preparatory orders which he had given. The same evening, at about nine o'clock, our mother was sitting with her

daughter by the fire, when word was brought her that a lady was waiting outside in a hackney-coach and very anxious to speak with her. Our mother went down accompanied by a servant, and the unknown lady gave her name. She then entreated the anxious mother to entrust her son to her, promising that she would herself show him a mother's care and tenderness. Promises not proving sufficient, she proceeded to vows. She employed all her eloquence, and it must have been great to have secured her success in such an enterprise. In a moment of emotion, consent was extorted; and for all Alfred had said, our mother was the one to weep.

On a foggy, melancholy evening, I accompanied the travellers to the mail coach, where they took their places amid all sorts of evil omens. When people whom everybody knows undertake to travel together in this way, they may be sure that their reputation has everywhere preceded them, and that mystery is out of the question. Any one must have been mad to suppose that such an expedition could remain a secret. Their purpose was neither to avoid the judgment of the public nor to defy it, but simply to submit to it; or rather they did not think about it at all. It can be no more of a secret today than the plot of a comedy; and, as all the world knows, *that* comedy was a drama. I am not going to rehearse it. I shall only relate such circumstances as I learned at a distance of three hundred leagues, and which I should have known in any case, even if I had received no confidences.

Alfred's first letter to his family was dated at Mar-

seilles. He was rejoiced to have fallen in with Stendhal (Henri Beyle), who was leaving for his consulate at Civita Vecchia, and whose caustic wit had enlivened the journey. The second letter, dated at Genoa, contained some details about manners, costumes, the women, and the famous picture galleries of that city, and also an account of a walk in the gardens of the Villa Palavicini, where Alfred had sat down to rest in a delicious spot beside a fountain, which was a great favorite with tourists. Other letters from Florence informed us that he had found in the Florentine "Chronicles" the subject for a drama in five acts, and was enjoying visiting the public squares and palaces which he meant to make the scenes of his characters' action. This was the drama of "Lorenzaccio."

From Bologna and Ferrara, which he merely passed through on his way to Venice, he did not write at all; but on his arrival at the death-struck city of the doges, he fell into transports of childlike delight. The room which he occupied in the Danieli palace, on the Molo degli Schiavoni, seemed to him to merit a full description. He never wearied, he said, of gazing on those ceilings under which the head of some great Venetian family must have walked long ago, or of contemplating, through the window, the entrance to the grand canal and the dome of La Salute. He knew that he should not be able to resist the temptation of laying amid these surroundings the scene of a romance or comedy; and he therefore took notes on Venetian customs and peculiarities of dialect, and made his gondolier chatter incessantly.

Near the middle of February, the letters which had

arrived regularly up to that time suddenly ceased. After a silence of six mortal weeks, our mother and I had determined to set out for Italy ourselves, when a letter was forwarded to us, which only added to our anxiety by its altered handwriting, its tone of profound sadness, and the deplorable news which it contained. The poor boy, hardly recovered from an attack of brain fever, spoke of dragging himself home as best he might. He wished, he said, to leave Venice as soon as he was strong enough to get into a carriage. "I shall bring you a sick body, a depressed mind, and a bleeding heart, but one which loves you still." He owed his life to the devoted care of two people who never left his pillow until youth and nature had fairly vanquished his malady. For hours he had lain in the very grasp of death, and had been conscious of it himself, in the midst of his strange and utter prostration. He attributed his cure, in part, to a soothing potion, opportunely administered by a young physician of Venice; and he wanted to keep the prescription for the draught. "It is a powerful narcotic," he added, "bitter like every thing which that man gave me, — even the life which I owe to him." The prescription was actually found among Alfred's papers, with the signature of Pagello.[1]

The sick man's return was heralded by a letter which plainly revealed his nervous irritability. "For pity's sake," he said, "put me in some other room than my own. At the bare idea of awaking to the sight of

[1] During a trip which I made to Venice in 1863, I ascertained that M. Pagello was still living and practising medicine at Bellune. — P. M.

that hideous, crude, green paper. I shrink as if the four walls were hung with *ennui* and disappointment."

To humor his invalid fancy, I determined to give him my room, which had two windows looking into the garden, and a paper of a peculiarly subdued tone. On the 10th of April the poor prodigal arrived, very much changed and emaciated; but, once under his mother's wing, recovery was only a matter of time. The severity of his attack may, however, be inferred from the slowness of his recovery, and the psychological phenomena by which it was accompanied.

The first time that my brother tried to tell us the true story of his illness, and his return to Paris, I perceived his face change suddenly, and he fainted away. He had an alarming nervous attack, and a month elapsed before he was able to recur to the subject and finish his recital.

Alfred kept his room for a long time, leaving it only in the evening to play chess with our mother. He had brought from Italy a sort of servant, a hair-dresser by trade, who had taken tolerably good care of him on the journey, without knowing a word of French. The lad was a poor enough valet; but his services were agreeable to Alfred, who often summoned Antonio and made him talk the dialect of his country. Antonio, however, contracted in these interviews a home-sickness so intense that it became necessary to send him back to Venice; and one morning he accordingly departed with a load of empty phials and old pommade-pots, which he proposed to fill with lard and spirits of wine, and sell to the inhabitants of the lagoons as specimens of Paris perfumery.

Our little sister, child as she was, already played the piano very well. We observed that Hummel's fine *concerto* in B minor had the power of luring the sick man from his retreat. When he had been shut up a good while, I used to ask for the Hummel *concerto*, and after a few minutes we would hear him open his door. Then he would come and sit down in a corner of the drawing-room, and when the piece was finished we often succeeded in detaining him by talking of music; but if a word recalled his trouble he would return to his chamber for the rest of the day.

When his craving for solitude was partially appeased, he opened his doors to his friend Tattet and myself, from whom he had nothing to conceal. We sometimes passed whole days in the invalid's chamber, and evenings which might as well be called nights. At first, Alfred was determined to be brave. He thought that pride would serve his turn, and plainly counted on that for subduing his grief and his regrets. But he was not long in recognizing the impotence of this auxiliary, and then he thrust it away as a futile point of honor. After a while he allowed us to see the depth of the wound which he had received. Despite the fearful memories which oppressed him, he hugged his grief, and sometimes he was angry with us for venturing to chide him on this head. At times he was morose, as though his very nature were changed. He suspected us of I know not what treachery, or accused us of utter indifference; and then, all in a moment, he would take shame for his suspicions, and revile himself for ingratitude with such exaggerated vehemence, that we could hardly soothe

him. As for those who had destroyed his peace, it was not enough for him to forgive them. He tried to find excuses or at least extenuating circumstances, for them: so sick was he at heart, so fearful that the courier from Venice would bring him no more letters. He wrote several, in which he did not hesitate to take all the blame to himself; some of them contained verses.[1]

When it became known in Paris that Alfred de Musset had returned without the companion with whom he had set out on his travels, the matter gave rise to much conjecture, and fables were invented which bore no resemblance to the truth. Alfred got wind of the gossip, and spared no pains to deny whatever might prove injurious to the lady whom he had left at Venice. In this respect, he merely did his duty as a chivalrous man: but he could not conceal his depression, nor the alteration in his looks; and malicious conjectures continued to be raised in spite of him.

If we would know his real state of mind during this time of trial, it is to himself that we must apply for a faithful picture of it: we must give place to the patient, and hear him in his own words. This is what he wrote on the subject in 1839, — after a lapse of five years:

"I thought at first that I felt neither mortification nor regret at being deserted. I took my leave proudly; but, when I came to look about me, I beheld a desert. An unexpected

[1] In 1859, I requested the person with whom these letters were deposited to return them to the family of the deceased poet. He calmly replied that the sacred trust had been violated, and the letters restored to the hands of one who should never have seen them again. I inquired what had become of them, and learned that they had been burned. I have in reserve a package of autograph letters on this subject. — P. M.

anguish seized me. My thoughts seemed all to be falling around me like dead leaves; and a feeling, hitherto unknown, awoke in my heart, — a feeling excruciatingly tender and strange and sad. I saw that I was powerless to struggle, and I gave myself up to despairing sorrow. I broke off all my customary occupations, and shut myself up in my chamber. There I stayed and wept for four months, seeing no one, and having no diversion save a mechanical game of chess in the evening.

"Little by little, however, my sorrow was assuaged, my tears were dried, my nights were no longer sleepless. I fell in love with melancholy. In this quieter mood I looked back at what I had left. No remnant of the past remained, — nothing at least which could be recognized. An old picture, a tragedy which I knew by heart, an utterly hackneyed romance, a talk with a friend, afforded me surprise. Such things had a new meaning: I knew then what experience is, and I saw that sorrow teaches us truth.

"That was a noble moment in my life. I love to pause at it; a hard but noble moment. I have not told you the particulars of my passion. The story, if I were to tell it you, would prove very like another; and what would be the use? My mistress was dark: she had large eyes. I loved her and she deserted me, and I suffered and wept for four months. Will not that suffice?

"I presently perceived the change which was being wrought in me; but it was as yet far from complete. One does not become a man in a day. I began by indulging a ridiculous exaltation: I wrote letters after the manner of Rousseau, — no matter about all that analysis! My sensitive and inquisitive spirit trembled incessantly like the magnetic needle; but what matter, if the pole is found? I had long been dreaming: now I began to think. I tried to say as little as possible, but I went back to the world. I wanted to see and learn things anew.

"One is captious when one is suffering. Sorrow is not easy to suit. I began like Cervantes' *curé*, by purging my

library and consigning my idols to the garret. I had in my room a good many lithographs and engravings, the best of which now seemed to me hideous. I did not care to climb a staircase to rid myself of these. I was content to put them in the fire. When my sacrifices were achieved, I counted up what remained. It was not much, but that little inspired me with a certain respect. My empty bookcase annoyed me; and I replaced it by one three feet broad, and containing three shelves, where slowly and reflectively I arranged a small number of volumes. My frames, on the contrary, remained empty a good while. Six months elapsed before I could fill them to my taste, and then I put in them old engravings from Raphael and Michael Angelo." [1]

All these details are precisely true. I was present at the *auto-da-fé* of the engravings, and the dismantling of the library. The books which he kept, and which he called his old friends, were the French classics of the seventeenth century, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Horace, Shakspeare, Byron, Goethe, the four great poets of Italy in one volume, Boccaccio, Rabelais, Mathurin Regnier, Montaigne, Amyot's Plutarch, and André Chenier. Leopardi's little volume was afterwards added to this choice collection. The frames had been vacant a good while when Tattet brought him, one day, a very fine engraving of Raphael's Saint Cecilia.

"I hope," said he, "that this master will find favor with your severity."

Alfred admired the engraving, and wished himself to frame it; and before long there grouped themselves around the Cecilia, the Virgins of the Chair and the Candles, the Poetry of the Vatican, Saint Catherine of

[1] From an unpublished work of Alfred de Musset's, entitled "Le Poëte Déchu."

did not like to refuse; and, the editor needing something of an imaginative character for the magazine, Alfred made an effort to resume work. Some time before, he had sketched in a few lines the plan of a comedy, to which he had given the provisional title of "Camille et Perdican." He had even written an introduction to it in verse; but nothing would have induced him to compel his Muse to descend by means of exorcisms, and he therefore translated his verses into prose.[1]

The piece which was entitled, "On ne badine pas avec l'Amour," bears marks, in some places, of the moral condition of the author. The singular character of Camille, certain speeches of Perdican's which are marked by a melancholy tenderness, and the conflict of pride between the two, suggest the influence of the sad recollections to which the poet had succumbed; but the whole piece, from beginning to end, is imbued with a passion and fervor of feeling, before which the "Dépit Amoureux" of Molière — the subject of which bears some resemblance to the loving strife of Camille and Perdican — turns positively pale.

Before he went to Italy, Alfred de Musset had sent to M. Buloz the MS. of "Fantasio," and this comedy had been published in his absence. Those who had the good fortune to know the author in the flower of his youth, and his youthful follies, know how faithfully he has depicted himself in the original character of "Fantasio." But that which, in the comedy, suffices for a whole character, a perfect type, and the subject of a piece,

1 The poetical form of the introduction to this comedy was published in the large quarto edition of 1866.

is found, when we examine the original closely, to constitute but a single facet of a brilliant mind, and one out of a thousand of the deep recesses of his heart. The Emperor Napoleon was right when, in a conversation on literary matters with the renowned Goethe, he said that there is not time in an acting play to develop a complex character, with all its apparent contradictions, its delicate shades, and infinitely multiplied incongruities; and that, if we would not confuse the spectator, we must represent only simple and legible characters, the clew to which is given in the first word they speak. Only in a biography and after the lapse of twenty years, can it be fully and convincingly shown that the tender Cœlio, the epicurean Octave, the frivolous Valentin, the light-hearted Fantasio, the impassioned Fortunio, and the philosopher in the "Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle," were one and the same man.

A more sustained work than the story of the loves of Camille and Perdican had been offered to the "Revue des Deux Mondes," but not inserted; namely, the drama of "Lorenzaccio." Probably it was thought too long; or it may be that the editor preferred to reserve it unpublished for the collected dramatic works brought out in book form by the house which issued the "Revue."[1]

In order to surmount the melancholy which, under the guise of constancy in love, still weighed his spirits down, Alfred undertook, in the month of September, a journey to Baden. The trip proved most beneficial; and he returned perfectly restored, both in mind

[1] "Un Spectacle dans un Fauteuil." Prose, 2 vols. 8vo. Paris and London: 1834.

reduce themselves to entirely simple dinners after swimming parties; and even in carnival times, when custom sanctions noisier amusements, Alfred very rarely took part in such. He refused ten invitations where he accepted one, and often quitted a circle and went home when the evening's mirth was at its height.

A new man, very unlike the old, had in fact replaced the Octave and Fantasio in him. The malice and stupidity of the insinuations against his mode of life at this period will be sufficiently evident from a list of the works composed during the year 1835. They were "Lucie," the "Nuit de Mai," the "Quenouille de Barbarine," the "Chandelier," the "Loi sur la Presse," the "Nuit de Décembre," and the "Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle." Where would he have found time for all this writing, if he had passed his nights in convivial entertainments, and his days in recruiting from the fatigue of the night? I say nothing of his reading, which nevertheless was not discontinued. Strictly speaking, however, he composed nothing during the first four months of that prolific year. One day in May, his friend, Alfred Tattet, asked him in my presence, what the fruits of his silence were to be, and this was the answer he made: —

"For the last year I have been reading over again what I had read before, and learning over what I thought I knew. Now I have gone back to the world and plunged into some of your pleasures, for the sake of seeing again what I had seen before. I have made the most sincere and heroic efforts to drive away the memory which obscured my vision, and to break up the per-

petually recurring habits of the old time. After having interrogated grief till it had nothing more to tell me, and quaffed my own tears, sometimes in solitude, sometimes before you, my friends who believe in me, I feel at last that I have surmounted misfortune, and wholly disengaged myself from my past. To-day, I have myself laid upon their bier my youth, my idleness, and my vanity. My thought seems to me like a plant which it has long been necessary to water, but which can now draw nourishment from the earth and grow in the sunshine. It seems to me now that I shall speak soon, and that I have something in my soul which must come out." [1]

It was the "Nuit de Mai" which was crying to come out. One spring evening, as we were returning from a walk, Alfred repeated to me the first two couplets of the dialogue between the Muse and the Poet, which he had just composed under the chestnuts of the Tuileries. He worked without interruption until morning, yet when he appeared at breakfast I detected no sign of fatigue upon his face. Like Fantasio, he had the color of the May in his cheeks. The Muse possessed him. All day long, he carried on simultaneously his work and his social intercourse, as one plays two games of chess at the same time. Now and then he quitted us and wrote a dozen verses or so, and then came back and resumed conversation. But, when night came, he returned to his work as to a lover's rendezvous. He had a little supper served in his own room, and he ought really to have ordered two covers, — one for his attendant Muse. He made a requisition of all the candlesticks in the

[1] These lines occur again, almost word for word in the "Poëte Déchu."

house, and lighted twelve candles. It must have seemed to the other inmates as if he were giving a ball. On the morning of the second day the piece was completed, and the Muse took wing; but she had been so well received that she promised to return. The poet blew out his lights, went to bed, and slept until nightfall. When he awoke, he read over what he had written, but found nothing to retouch. Then out of the ideal world where he had lived for two days, the poet dropped abruptly down to earth, sighing as though he had been rudely awakened from some delectable fairy dream. His enthusiasm was succeeded by a sudden lassitude, a disgust with life and its petty troubles, and a profound depression. It seemed as if all the luxury of Sardanapalus, and all the refined amusements which Paris had to offer, would hardly be enough to rouse him from his dejection. But the sight of a pretty face, a strain of music, a graceful note opportunely received, dispelled the shadows, and he was obliged to own that he was resigned to living a little longer.

In the eyes of some, these alternations of high excitement and utter prostration are only a proof of weakness; but they are mistaken. Insensibility is not strength. It better deserves the name of impotence. "The man who takes the strongest dose of life," said the philosopher Flourens, "is the man who feels most keenly." In more than one passage of his works, Alfred de Musset, who knew himself thoroughly, has described the exceptional organization which makes what we call a poet; but among his papers I have discovered yet another definition, which may, I think, be appropriately inserted here.

"Be sure that the restless spark imprisoned in this paltry skull is a divine thing. You admire a fine instrument — a piano of Erard, a violin of Stradivarius; but, great God! what are they compared to a human soul? In all the thirty years which I have lived, I have never used my faculties as freely as I desired. I have never been quite myself except when I have been silent. I have as yet only heard the opening bars of the melody which perhaps is in me. The instrument will soon crumble into dust, and I have but tuned it; yet that has been a delight.

"Whoever you are, you can understand me if you have loved any thing whatsoever, — your country, a woman, a friend; nay, even your own welfare, a house, a room, a bed. Suppose that you are returning from a journey: you are coming back to Paris. You are at the frontier, — stopped only by the custom-house. If you are capable of emotion, do you not feel a certain pleasurable impatience at the thought that you are returning to *that* house, *that* room? Does not your heart beat quickly when you turn the corner, when you approach, when at last you arrive? Ah well! it is but a natural pleasure and a vulgar impatience which you feel for the bed and table which you know so well. But suppose that you felt the like for all that lives, — noble and common, known and unknown alike. Suppose your life a continuous journey, every boundary your frontier, every inn your home, your children awaiting you on every threshold, your wife on every couch: you think that I am exaggerating; but, no! It is thus with the poet! It was so with me when I was twenty!"[1]

He might have added: "So I am still, and so I shall always be." As M. Saint René Taillandier has said of Goethe, he planted flowers of poetry at every step. Every keen and sweet impression which he received in life produced some piece of verse. After he had written

[1] Quoted from the "Pöete Déchu." This page was written in 1839. — P. M.

the "Nuit de Mai," as though there had been healing in the first kiss of the Muse, he declared to me that his wound was perfectly cured. I asked him if he were quite sound and sure that the wound would not open again.

"Possibly," he replied, "but if it does open it will only be poetically."

Twenty years later, in our mother's drawing-room, the conversation turned on divorce, and Alfred said in the hearing of several people who never forgot the remark: "Our marriage laws are not so bad after all. There was a moment of my youth when I would gladly have given ten years of my life to legalize divorce, so that I might espouse a married woman. But if my vows had been heard, I should have blown my brains out in six months."

VIII.

IN the month of August, 1835, the "Quenouille de Barbarine" appeared, and the author immediately set to work on the "Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle," of which, however, the title was not yet determined. He was laboring with zeal, when he read one morning in a newspaper the text of a proposed law which created a new misdemeanor in the case of printed matter; namely, that of objectionable *intent or tendency.* The penalty affixed struck him as enormous. The then minister, profiting by the alarm, occasioned by the attempt of Fieschi, was demanding of the legislators new weapons against free discussion. Alfred did not resist the temptation to write an occasional poem, which those would seem never to have read who reproach him with habitual indifference to the welfare of his country and the events of the day. In truth, he defined his position in these words: —

> "Pour être d'un parti j'aime trop la paresse,
> Et dans aucun haras je ne suis étalon.[1]"

But the boasted idleness of an exceedingly busy and industrious young man was only self-respect, and the firm resolution never to abandon poetry. This wise line of conduct, from which he never swerved, did not pre-

[1] "I love idleness too well to belong to any party, and I am not the stallion of any stud."

vent him from feeling most acutely all which concerned the safety and honor of his country. The verses on the new law were addressed in the form of a letter to the prime minister, who was wise enough to cherish no grudge against their author. Politicians are wont to smile when poets mix themselves up with the affairs of this world; but the men who at that time held the destinies of France in their hands are now reduced to asking, on their own behalf, a little of the freedom of which they so rudely deprived others, and against which they so loudly declaimed.[1] Fieschi's case proved that there was no correlation whatever between the newspapers, books, and theatrical performances of the year 1835, and an obscure conspiracy hatched by mercenary subalterns in a grocer's shop; but we were enriched by the crime of moral complicity and the penalty of transportation.

All this while, Alfred was working at the "Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle." He went continually into society, yet wrote every evening an appalling number of those pages, where we feel, as we read, the quivering of his pen. A novel incident interrupted him in the midst of his work. He came home one evening perplexed by some ambiguous words addressed to him by a woman, and accompanied by looks more significant than her speech. Disgusted as he was with love, and barely recovered from his previous attack, Alfred observed the lady's associates with suspicion, and fancied he saw traces of a conspiracy into which two people had entered to destroy his peace. He did not hesitate to bring the

[1] This was written under the reign of Napoleon III.

charge, and the younger lady exculpated herself completely: but, while she proved that she had had no wish to inspire affection, she proved equally that she did not feel it; and the accuser found his position, with reference to her, somewhat embarrassing.[1]

Obliged to retract his unjust suspicions, Alfred asked himself what would have happened if they had been well founded; and, in a flash, he imagined the whole comedy of the "Chandelier."

I was then a modest hack-writer, having but two hours in the day — the time from four to six — to give to my friends and social duties, while I worked all the evening in the hope of acquiring a little talent; that is to say, the independence for which I pined. One night I was at home scribbling on I know not what, while my more worldly brother was abroad. As usual, it was past midnight when he came home: but between two and three o'clock in the morning he came to my room with some loose leaves of paper in his hand; and, seating himself on the foot of my bed, he began to read that charming scene in which the rage of Master André is opposed by the *sangfroid* of the crafty Jacqueline. We both went into fits of laughter; and the second scene, the one in which Clavaroche devises his odious machination, was written before daybreak. I entreated my brother to think seriously about having this delicious comedy put on the stage; but he replied that its fate was fixed. "If any theatre wants to adopt it," said he, "they will

[1] I have already told this story briefly in the notice which accompanies the edition of 1866. There seems to be no reason now why I should not give it more in detail. — P. M.

find the 'Chandelier' in the pages of the 'Revue.'" The piece actually appeared there Nov. 1, 1835; and nobody ever suspected that it could be played until thirteen years later.

This time the characters of the comedy were imaginary. There is no similarity whatever between Jacqueline and the lady who so innocently furnished the theme of the piece. But the author continued to play the part of "Fortunio" toward her, although he uttered no reproaches. One morning as he was walking along the Rue de Buci, with a thoughtful face and downcast eyes, he began to dream of the hazard of making this lady a declaration of love by letter. All at once, he said aloud, "But what if I were to say that I love you?" then lifting his head he met the eyes of a passer-by who began to laugh at his outbreak. His doubts naturally resolved themselves into a poem, and he composed the stanzas to Ninon. That evening, in the lady's drawing-room, some ten persons being present, he took a paper out of his pocket and handed it to the mistress of the house, remarking, with an air of entire simplicity, that he had been writing some verses, and wanted to know what she thought of them. The lady read the verses to herself with an indifferent air, and handed him back the paper without a word. Afterwards she asked him for it again, held it open in her hand for a while, and then put it in her pocket, as if unconsciously.

On the morrow, at the usual calling hour, Alfred sallied forth to receive the reprimand which he expected; but he found nobody at home. He was avoided. When at last he did obtain an interview, it was before witnesses;

and the lady apparently did not remember that any verses had been addressed to her. Alfred pretended to be equally oblivious, but his interest was only piqued. Their silence ended in an abrupt explanation, and a full and unreserved avowal of his sentiments. In this first episode, the lover's happiness lasted three weeks, at the end of which period Alfred was assailed by new suspicions. The taste of the poison which he had drunk at Venice the year before came back to him. If his friend had been gentle and patient, she might have cured him of his jealous distrust; but unhappily she had a haughty spirit, susceptible and impulsive, which brooked neither precaution nor delay. After a stormy week, they resolved to part, and the resolution was formulated in terms of crushing force. Alfred wrote a desperate letter in which he acknowledged himself in the wrong, and received, in reply, a request for the return of the letters, ten or twelve at most, which she had written him. He wrapped them up in a piece of cloth along with a lock of hair, a few little things which had been meant for souvenirs, and a flower which had scarcely had time to fade. Only one hand might hold this "dear and fragile treasure." He sent it back with tears, and remained face to face with himself. It was verily an amputation. When he thought of the usual patience of women under such circumstances, of their weakness, and the manœuvres which they know so well how to try, he asked himself by what strange fatality he had encountered the only woman in the world capable of a course so hard and cruel.

But his Muse did not, as on the previous occasion,

wait six months before consoling him. Publication, moreover, was one way of calling the attention of his ungrateful mistress to the expression of his grief and regret. One fearfully stormy night I came in at about midnight, and saw so many lights in my brother's room that I thought he must have a large number of guests. He was, however, writing the "Nuit de Décembre." That poem, fraught with so deep a melancholy, belongs to the episode which I have just related, and the reader of it sees plainly that the poet has drunk of a new cup. That picture of solitude; that conception of a pale, sable-clad figure, becoming visible only in moments of anguish and desolation, — could only have originated in a new situation and a recent sorrow. I am aware that many readers have seen, in the "Nuit de Décembre," only a reaction from the memories of Italy, and a sort of complement to the "Nuit de Mai;" but this is an error which requires correction. No doubt should be suffered to linger about that passage of the poem in which the deserted lover reproaches the woman who "knows not how to forgive." I know the truth: and I will not permit the slightest confusion between two very different women; one of whom had really something to forgive, and the right to refuse her pardon. This is why I have chosen to dwell on that new love affair; the prologue to which gave rise to the "Nuit de Décembre."

We will now return to the "Confession d'un enfant du Siècle." The author had had a sorrowful fancy for ending the romance at the point where Brigitte confesses her love to Octave. "My hero," he said, "will be more fortunate than I have been, for I have myself brought

him to the moment when he will receive consolation. Let us go no farther! To-morrow will be too painful." But it was urged upon him that a good ending would render the book insignificant; and, having consented to finish the second volume, he set to work assiduously.

In spite of its title, we must not expect to find in the "Confession," an autobiography. The sentiments expressed are indeed to some extent his own; but truth of incident is nowhere to be found, not even by disregarding chronological order. The author never meant to tell the story of his youth. He did not merely draw upon his own recollections; but he observed whatever of life and movement he saw around him, and collected whatsoever he thought might be presented as symptomatic of the moral malady which he was attempting to describe; whatsoever might strengthen that philosophic thesis which gives his work a higher range than properly belongs to any mere society romance. Many of the real incidents have been developed or modified, that they might serve as illustrations of character. The attempt to separate what is real from that which appertains merely to art and the necessities of the case would prove utterly futile, and even if successful would shed no light on the life of the author.

As regards "Desgenais," I need only remark that so strong a type could not have been a portrait. There is summed up in this character a whole class of young people with whom Alfred had been intimate, and whom he named "men of the flesh," to distinguish them from the men of sentiment typified by Octave. The "Confession," delayed by events of which the public knew

nothing, was awaited with impatience. It finally appeared in the early days of 1836; but those who hoped for revelations were disappointed. It did not create the least scandal. And the best advice I can offer to those who read it now, is that they give up their conjectures, and endeavor to learn from it something about themselves and the times in which they live.

IX.

THE eleventh of December had been Alfred de Musset's twenty-fifth birthday. The new year upon which he was entering began as badly as the previous one had done. Precisely because no fearful memories, no painful associations, were mingled with his second disappointment in love, he felt less energy than on the former occasion for contending against *ennui* and dejection. A healthful heart can summon the strength needful to surmount a passion of which it is ashamed; but, when there is no help save in cold reason, the heart refuses to be healed. Alfred felt that he had made a vain boast when he said to his stern mistress in the "Nuit de Décembre," "He who loses you has not lost all." He fancied, on the contrary, that he had lost the happiness of his whole life; and he could not be resigned to so great a sacrifice, nor allow himself to be condemned without being heard. The first time he met the lady in question after the publication of the "Nuit de Décembre," she told him that she had been both amazed and affected by the reading of the poem; that she had not supposed him capable of suffering such distress; that when she saw him unhappy, she pitied him sincerely. Then, as though afraid of having said too much, she added that it could make no difference. Alfred profited by the occasion to let her know what he had suffered, and then asked to be allowed to resume his visits as a

friend; adding that she might receive him without danger, since *it could make no difference.* She owned the justice of his reasoning, and gave the permission required; and that night the poor child came home as pleased as though he had won a great victory.

When I learned the nature of the success in which he was exulting, and which he immediately confided to me, I did not hesitate to declare it a bad piece of business. "You do not, either of you," I said jestingly, "know what you want. Your fair one is like a fish nibbling at the hook, and all the while saying to the fisherman, 'You need not expect to catch me.' And you are like a man sick with gastric fever who consents to be treated for inflammation of the lungs. It is easy to foresee the result. In obedience to your ungrateful lady, you will not whisper a word of love; but you will betray your feelings a dozen times in a day. She on her part will be moved by your constancy; and, in her gratitude to you for ceasing to love her, she will fall in love with you herself. And, after a fortnight of this sort of thing, your obedience and her determination will end like the reformation of that drunkard who went back to the inn to treat his resolution."

In the very height of his troubles, Alfred always enjoyed a laugh at his own expense. It was one of his consolations, and I knew it, and often availed myself of the fact; and in this case my brother, while he laughed at my grumbling, felt in his heart that it was just. In a few days my predictions were verified. Alfred saw his implacable mistress three or four times in a week, and scrupulously observed her orders. He said not a word

of love, but inwardly he was in a rage. Then the temptation assailed him to break silence by another poem; and, this method having succeeded before, he composed some new stanzas for his own consolation, but resolved to wait a while before offering them to her. The following are the verses, which have never been published: —

TO NINON.

For all your wit, my lady cool and fair,
Your studied languors, and the lofty air
That suits you well, albeit it works us ill, —
'Tis certain that you cannot have your will.

Certain, though not a sign thereof be shown,
That in my heart's domain you rule alone;
That love is not destroyed when love is hidden,
And that I love you, Ninon, though forbidden.

Certain it is that, in your own despite,
The love you would rebuke you still invite;
That men elect to writhe beneath your scorn,
And pangs of loving you are lightly borne.

And when, O spirit, sensitive and shy,
Spurning our lightest touch, you start and fly,
The scattered radiance of your loveliness
Falls on us, and our torment turns to bliss.

Be what you will then! Shed your sweetest graces,
Scorn or allure us, or our woes deride;
And like a diamond with a million faces,
Turn ever more a new and dazzling side.

One soul there is will yield you thanks unceasing,
And the glad remnant of its days unknown;
For me, your blows are better than all blessing,
And yours I am, and never more mine own.

And one there is who knows my heart's whole story,
My Muse, Ninon! She knows, but never tells!
You are so like, I think when she's before me
I see yourself! I scarce could love her else!

And there are nights when on the dark arises
A sweet look, shifting like a meteor's ray.
A sweet dream comes and goes, returns, entices
(Poets and happy folk are mad, they say).

A visionary being I embrace,
A wordless music murmurs in my ear,
Dark, spirit eyes look soft on my disgrace:
I turn to heaven, Ninon, and see you there.

O my beloved, do not take away
My darling grief, my lone life's mortal charm!
Pity me not, but let me suffer, pray!
No plaint of mine shall work you any harm.

Once indited, these verses could not fail of ultimately finding their way to the lady who had inspired them. If the author had attempted to hand them to her himself, as he had done with the first stanzas to Ninon, she would perhaps have refused to take them; but the post-office was invented to surmount difficulties of this nature, and, by way of the post, the second stanzas arrived at their address. Alfred awaited the result with some anxiety, until through the same medium he received a large envelope. The lady was not much of an artist, but the envelope contained a pen-and-ink drawing, representing a large drawing-room clock, which the lover readily recognized, and the hands of which indicated the hour of three.

That evening, in spite of all his efforts to appear sober and self-possessed, our poet was in a transport of delight. He was positively beside himself. The second verses to Ninon had been as successful as the first. The lady liked pretty poetry, and poetry had wrung from her the confession which love had failed to extort. She was an extremely clever person ; and, instead of absorbing all her friend's leisure she spurred him on to work, declaring that she should look upon his future performances as so many proofs of his affection. They were both confident of a long future ; and I augured well of these indications, so long as their good understanding should last.

It lasted a fortnight. Chance had already determined the issue of the affair. This time the rupture was no fault of the lover's, who had profited by his previous experience ; but, while he was on his guard against his own jealousy and unjust suspicions, some one else who was jealous had guessed the whole truth. The Ninon of the stanzas was destined to figure under another name in a prose narrative. The situation, as I have said elsewhere, was reproduced in " Emmeline."

The dangerous point in affairs of this nature is always that moment of internal conflict, when a virtuous and loyal woman fully believes that she is coming off victorious. Why should she dissimulate so long as her conscience does not reproach her ? To dissimulate her feelings would be to avow herself in the wrong. She does not wish to yield ; she is not going to yield : but the day comes when love is too strong for her, and prudence awakes too late. She catches a glimpse of the

future, and a few hours suffice to break up and destroy happiness, purpose, every thing. Alfred might not perhaps have resigned himself to the second separation if he had had the jealous person only to deal with; but when he found that he must make a man wretched, and bring about an inevitable catastrophe, he insisted no longer, but yielded to the lady's entreaties, — respectfully and sadly.

So ended the love story of "Emmeline." Just as in the romance which bears that title, the affair was concluded sorrowfully, to the gay notes of a waltz, between two figures of a cotillon, by the intervention of a compassionate but inexorable friend. Alfred made the very promise which he put into the mouth of his fictitious Gilbert. "Any thing in the world, for your sake." The condition imposed was complete separation. Alfred intended to go away. He made his arrangements for so doing, and announced his purpose to his friends; but his courage failed him, and he asked for one day of grace, and then another. And then, suddenly, he was apprised that his departure would not be necessary.

Alfred was supported under the pain of this wrench by the very sacrifice which he was making. Ought he not to consider himself fortunate to be able to restore his friend's peace at the expense of his own? He wanted to give an example of a sorrow bravely borne. But when the negotiations were concluded, and his unhappiness was achieved, and he found himself left alone to struggle with his regrets, he began to ask himself why he should live any longer. I could see that he was dreaming of all that he had lost, and fairly luxuriat-

ing in his disappointment. He plunged into his sorrow as deeply as might be, preferring active pain to passive dejection. I told him that he was in a fair way to make his malady incurable, and he replied: "It is so."

Alfred de Musset used openly to profess for M. de Lamartine both sympathy and admiration. One day in the month of February, 1836, under the influence of a fresh attack of melancholy, I found him re-reading the "Meditations." This poem, whose tranquillizing power he had just experienced, inspired him with the desire to give poetical expression to his own gratitude to the author of the "Lac." He repeated to me the first part of the epistle to Lamartine, as far as the verse where he says that Lord Byron in his last days —

"Sur terre autour de lui, cherchait pour qui mourir." [1]

But he hesitated about going on with the poem, fearing that it would seem pretentious in him to assume that Lamartine would be interested in the story of his troubles. By way of disposing of his modest scruples, I undertook boldly to assure him that verses like these would reflect as much honor on Lamartine as on their author, and that all Europe would feel an interest in the sorrow out of which they had sprung. Accordingly we proceeded to the usual ceremonies which distinguished his days of inspiration, — the grand illumination and the supper. The Muse was only awaiting permission to descend. On the following day the epistle was far advanced; and on the first of March, 1836, it appeared in the "Revue des Deux Mondes." Some time after-

[1] "Looked the world over, seeking some one for whom he might die."

wards Alfred received a note from M. de Lamartine, inviting him to call. He hastened to comply, and for three or four months there was constant intercourse between the two poets. Evenings after he returned from these visits, Alfred would rehearse in the family circle the talk of the morning. Among other things, I remember his saying the first time he came home that he had been promised a reply to his verses. M. de Lamartine had asked for time in which to express his gratitude, saying, with a charming good grace, that it would be no easy matter to devise a reply worthy of the letter.[1]

Until the day should arrive in which he was to be glorified by this reply, Alfred dwelt with pride and pleasure on the promise. We know how he loved to burrow in the picture and engraving shops. In one such he found a crayon copy of the "Poetry" of Carlo Dolci, the features of which were really very like those of the

[1] In the nineteenth instalment of M. de Lamartine's "Literary Conversations" we were told, in 1867, why this reply never appeared; but I must confess that I never perfectly understood the explanation. It was somewhat amazing to learn that M. de Lamartine totally forgot his interviews with Alfred, and that when he found him at the Institute in 1852, he supposed that he was addressing him for the first time. In the same nineteenth conversation we are told that M. de Lamartine had at first but a poor opinion of the lyrical ability of this young man, an opinion derived from reading the "Rhin Allemand;" but that some time later, *a shepherd* handed him in the park of Saint Point the number of the "Revue des Deux Mondes" which contained the verses addressed to himself, and that, when he read these, his prejudice vanished. Now the "Rhin Allemand" was not written until June, 1841, and the "Épître à M. de Lamartine" appeared March 1, 1836; consequently, it would seem as if M. de Lamartine's memory must have served him very ill when he attempted to account for his silence; or else that it took the shepherd who was charged with the delivery of his copy of the "Revue des Deux Mondes" five years to find him in the park of Saint Point. — P. M.

author of the "Meditations." He instantly bought the drawing, and gave it a place in one of the frames which adorned his study; and his friends remember to this day how highly he prized this ideal portrait, and the childlike pleasure which he took in the contemplation thereof. Afterwards, when all Paris was rushing to the performances of the "Caprice," Mme. Allan conceived a fancy for this crayon. Alfred dared not refuse it to the actress who had insured the success of the play; but he always regretted losing it, and in the very last months of his life he said repeatedly: "Why need Mme. Allan have taken away my Lamartine?"

The readers of the "Revue" remarked the peculiarly careful execution of the "Epistle." The author wanted it to be faultless. We know now the circumstances under which that flower of poesy was sown, and there need be no mistake about the feelings which caused it to blossom. How is it possible fully to comprehend the poet's yearning regret, without the knowledge that his love was one which a mere sense of personal dignity would not have compelled him to crush out? The story told in the letter to Lamartine is that of an evening of deep agitation, when Paris was resounding with the coarse uproar of the Carnival. Those who were mistaken about the subject of the "Nuit de Décembre" committed the same error with regard to the letter. Alfred smiled at their misconceptions; but, when asked by his friends to explain, his answer used to be: "You can think what you please."

His reserve was just and proper at the time, but now all is changed. A third of a century has elapsed, and

the letter to Lamartine has become something beside the effort of a young poet of great promise serving to embellish the last number of a review. He who uttered that cry of pain has been removed by an early death; but the cry is echoing yet, and the heart of the public is moved by it. There is a peremptory demand for an explanation, and it ought to be made.

There are subtle differences to be observed in the reproaches addressed by lovers to their cruel mistresses. Read, for example, the whole of the passage in the "Lettre à Lamartine" which begins, —

> "O mon unique amour! Que vous avais-je fait?
> Vous m'aviez pu quitter, vous qui juriez la veille,
> Que vous étiez ma vie, et que Dieu le savait." [1]

Far otherwise did the poet talk in the "Nuit de Mai!" These verses are the sequel to those of the "Nuit de Décembre." They are addressed to the same person, and she has had no occasion to blush for them. The time for misapprehensions is past. Let us render to every one his due. I would renounce the purpose of writing my brother's life, were it not permitted me to shed a little light on those finest passages in his poems, where I can feel at every word the very throbbings of his heart.

She who inspired the letter to Lamartine needed no assistance to recognize her own likeness in it. Shortly after it appeared, the author found in his room, one night when he went home, two Sèvres vases accompanied by a note in which occurred the following passage: —

"[1] My only love, what wrong had I done you that you cast me off, when you had sworn, only the night before, that you were mine and God knew it?"

"If you knew the state into which I was thrown by reading your verses, you would be sorry for having said in them that your heart was caught by *a woman's caprice*. It was true love and no caprice from which we both suffered. Do not be so unjust to me as to doubt it. Even now, if I had only myself to think of, I would wipe away the tears which blind my eyes, and leave all and lose all for you. One word from you would be enough, and I have now no hesitation in saying so. But because you love me, you will let me weep."

These lines wrought a great change in the mind of the distressed lover. Under the seeming sternness of his treatment he recognized a sincere compassion. His grief was shared; and this thought comforted him. Twenty times he repeated: "She would have left all if I had said a word; but I never will say the word which might destroy her."

Destiny brought to Alfred de Musset a compensation for his sacrifices. If there is a being on earth to whom a woman's friendship may be useful, it is surely a poet or an unhappy lover. He fulfilled both conditions when he became the friend and *godson* of a highly gifted woman whom he had known for a long time. Hers was one of the most agreeable *salons* in Paris. Music was given there once a week, and on these days numbers of people came to hear Prince Belgiojoso, Géraldy, the Countess de Sparre, &c. On other days, there were fewer guests and conversation only.

One evening they were amusing themselves by bestowing on one another fanciful sobriquets. The mistress of the house had been appointed to find a name for Alfred de Musset, and she dubbed him "Prince Phosphor of the restless heart."

The lady who thus baptized him permitted him to call himself her godson, and her his godmamma.

From this graceful intimacy, and the influence which the godmother acquired over the mind of her boy, there resulted, on the one side, judicious advice and encouragement, consolation, and the stimulus to exertion; on the other, a constant desire to deserve the approval of a reader who endeavored to be exacting, precisely because she was fond of him.

For years Alfred de Musset felt bound to keep his godmother fully informed of all the impressions which he received. Not an amusing idea entered his head, nor a fleeting sentiment his heart, but it was communicated to her. The introduction to "Silvia" shows that that story was written in answer to a letter in which the poet had been reproved for allowing his Muse too long a rest. I shall tell later how he replied to a more serious reproach, by a sonnet addressed to his godmother, which could not well have been made public while the author lived."[1]

[1] The "godmother" was Mme. Maxime Jaubert, and the friendship between her and Alfred de Musset one of the sweetest, most healthful, and helpful influences of the poet's life. — Tr.

X.

A BRIEF and unimportant episode in Alfred's career, took him for a time away from all literary labors and associations. When he first re-entered his study, he examined all the objects about him earnestly, as if they had been old friends. His natural vivacity made all contrasts pleasing to him. One day I found him there, promenading up and down, while he alternately hummed that *cavatina* of Pacini which Liszt's piano and the voice of Rubini had lately brought into fashion, and murmured under his breath lines which arranged themselves in hemistichs. Finally he paused before his writing-table, seized a large sheet of paper, and wrote as follows:—

LA NUIT DE JUIN.

(LE POÈTE.)

Muse, quand le blé pousse il faut être joyeux,
Regarde ces coteaux et leur blonde parure;
Quelle douce clarté dans l'immense nature,
Tout ce qui vit ce soir doit se sentir heureux.[1]

1 Or thus:—

"O my Muse, the corn is up, 'tis the season of delight,
Look now the young sun, that crowns the marble wear,
And a softened splendor rests on all the intimate air:
All things that breathe rejoice on such a night."

"In fact," I said, as I perused these lines, "this is going to be one of those nights when there is no death in the soul."

He laughed, and promised that the "Nuit de Juin" should treat of love and pleasure only. Dinner-time was approaching, and knowing, as I did, that the Muse was fond of descending at the shepherd's hour,[1] I made no doubt that on the morrow the piece would be half done. Unluckily, Tattet came in, and wanted to take his friend off to dine at a restaurant. I besought him not to interrupt so important a work, representing the harm he might be doing to the poet, the public, and himself. Tattet allowed that I was right, but the dinner was ordered, and he had promised my brother to the other guests, among whom were MM. Alfred and Hippolyte Mosselman, De Jean, and Arvers.[2] Tattet assured me that they would break up early, and that poetry should not be the loser; and Alfred departed, to my great regret. He came home late, and his head was tired. The next day I made inquiries for the "Nuit de Juin," and his answer was that there were thirty days in the month. He knew, however, that the Muse was offended and would not return; so he took his hat and went off for a call. The occasion had passed, and the "Nuit de Juin" stopped there. To-day, as I look upon the broad blank sheet, discolored by time, which I found among the author's papers, and read again the

[1] L'heure du Berger is the hour when the gentle shepherd enjoys the company of his mistress. — Tr.

[2] Felix Arvers, — a very clever original fellow of a melancholy temperament, who, nevertheless, wrote several very lively and successful *vaudevilles*. He died young. — P. M.

title and the four autograph lines, I can hardly be reconciled to the thought that the page will never be filled.

We have, however, a compensation for this loss. Alfred, who had trained alternately in the two rollicking companies commanded severally by his friend Tattet and Prince Belgiojoso, stopped short one morning and announced that he had had dissipation enough. He compared himself to a shuttlecock, sent back and forth between two battledores, and was resolved to declare his independence by returning to his mother's lodgings. He brought back a quantity of new impressions, and, hence, of new ideas. He donned his dressing-gown, flung himself into his arm-chair, and proceeded to read himself a better lecture than his father or his uncle could have delivered. From this unspoken dialogue came the scene between Valentin and the excellent Van Buck, and afterwards a piece in three acts, entitled "Il ne Faut Jurer de Rien." So it is, that in the life of a true poet nothing is lost or useless. The characters in this little piece were so purely comic, and the dénouement so happily conceived, that when the author came to put it on the stage, there were very few alterations to be made.

This comedy appeared in the "Revue" of July 1, 1836, and immediately afterward the "elastic ball" resumed its flights. Then came another return to our home, the same pleasure at the sight of his study, the same desire to shut himself up there, the same allurements offered to a Muse who only feigned resentment; for our poet had now no serious offence with which to reproach him-

self. But something more important was now in question than the amusing conversation of Uncle Van Buck.

The "Nuit d'Août" was, for our poet, a night of veritable rapture. He had decorated his room and thrown open the windows. The light of the candles played over the flowers that filled four huge vases symmetrically disposed. The Muse came in the guise of a youthful bride. No festival or evening's entertainment ever compared with these glorious hours of facile and fascinating labor; and since, on the present occasion, the poet's thoughts were peaceful, his heart sound, his mind vigorous, and his imagination full of sap, he enjoyed a pleasure inconceivable by the vulgar. To form an idea of this poetic intoxication, we need neither recall what has been told of the effect of opium, hashish, or other inebriating poisons, nor that accumulation of the more refined pleasures of sense which Oriental story-tellers have lavished on the heroes of their fabulous narratives. One must judge by the degree of enthusiasm and sensibility with which he is himself endowed, by raising to the tenth power the pleasure which he receives from reading this beautiful poem of the "Nuit d'Août," what the author must have enjoyed in writing it.

No sorrowful or bitter leaven mingled with his poetic intoxication this time, and his happy mood lasted for several days. All through the composition of the "Nuit d'Août," the poet felt himself in communion with his unknown readers, and never more so than at the close of the last stanza, —

"Aime et tu renaîtras; fais toi fleur pour éclore."

The spell remained unbroken until the publication of the piece ; but, on the morrow, I found him moody, trying in vain to read a chapter in some new novel or other. I asked what ailed him, and he replied: "By great good luck, the fish has passed some days in the water. At present he is sprawling in a corn-field."

I took him off to the swimming-school, where his body at least might be restored to its beloved watery medium. There we met Prince Belgiojoso and his comrades, who invited us to go with them to Broggi's Italian restaurant. After a dinner seasoned by exercise and keen appetites, we had some music, and the evening passed merrily. We returned rather late ; but, before going to bed, Alfred attempted to finish the novel which he had laid aside in the morning. He read aloud to me a sentence in which we counted an incredible number of adjectives. Every substantive dragged two or three in its train, and the effect was most uncouth. The reader in high good-humor asked me what I thought of it all, and I replied in the words of Léandre: "It is very much the fashion."

"I wish I knew," rejoined Alfred, "what the good people of the Provinces think of such a style, and whether they suppose it a fair sample of Parisian literature."

After discussing this question until a very late hour of the night, Alfred conceived the notion of addressing a letter to the editor of the "Revue," in the character of a denizen of some small town. We talked it over ; and he concluded that, instead of giving the views of one provincial, it would be better to compare the impres-

sions of two. Stendhal, whom we numbered among our friends, had published sundry articles, sometimes over the signature of "Dupuis," and sometimes over that of "Cotonet." Alfred adopted these two names, enjoying the idea of Stendhal's own mystification. Soon after, there appeared in the "Revue" the first letter of "Two Inhabitants of Ferté-sous-Jouarre," on the abuse of adjectives.[1] Under a light and attractive form, this letter treated with clearness and force a question of literary taste, and it created a considerable sensation. Stendhal was enchanted with the good sense of his pseudonyms; but people persisted in attributing the article to him, and he had great difficulty in convincing them that he was not its author. He even received complimentary letters from a great distance. But the secret was soon divulged. Franz Liszt learned it from a lady to whom it was confided by the editor of the "Revue," and Liszt took pleasure in imparting it to his many friends.

A distressing piece of news reached Paris at about this time. The newspapers announced the death of Mme. Malibran. Alfred had been one of her passionate admirers,[2] and her untimely death affected his poetic

[1] Alfred de Musset never saw "Ferte-sous-Jouarre," all statements to the contrary notwithstanding of pretended biographers who deserve a different name. He chose that town because the name struck his fancy.

[2] But only an admirer. One day, in a railway-car, I heard some unknown persons conversing about my brother, and deploring the fact that Mme. Malibran had never returned his affection for her; saying that, if she had, it might have defended the charming young poet from another and more perilous attachment. The story was retailed freely as matter of public notoriety; but the truth is that, except upon the stage, Alfred never saw Mme. Malibran but once in his life, when she sang in a parlor, and that he never spoke to her.

sensibilities keenly. On the fifteenth of October, he published the verses which one so often hears quoted, and which so many people know by heart. Perhaps the poet felt in himself the same fatal predilection for suffering with which he reproached the great singer when he wrote the famous verse, —

"Tu regardais aussi la Malibran mourir."

The same might have been said of him twenty years later.

The year 1836 closed amid the excitement caused by the attempt of Meunier. This was the fourth time that the king had narrowly escaped death. Alfred, who did not forget the hospitalities of Neuilly, shared the universal feeling. He wrote, merely for his own satisfaction, a sonnet, which he did not intend to publish, but of which his friend Tattet requested a copy. Tattet showed the copy to M. Édouard Bocher, who lent it to his brother Gabriel, the librarian of the Duc d'Orléans; and so it was that the verses on Meunier's attempt came to the notice of the Prince Royal. An express from the château soon brought their author the note which follows: —

"Our common friend M. Bocher has just shown me, my dear schoolfellow, a noble page extracted from your poetical portfolio. These truly fine verses, in which a dry and ungracious subject receives dignity from the elevation of the poet's thought and his noble simplicity of expression, would have touched me, even had their author been unknown. It is with real delight, however, that I recognize in them the sentiments of an old school-comrade; and, as I read, I find myself carried back to younger and happier days.

"I wanted to thank you in person for this good gift, and I

seize the occasion offered by New Year's day to beg your acceptance of the token herewith offered by your old associate, and the sincere admirer of your beautiful gifts.

"FERDINAND PHILIPPE D'ORLÉANS.

"TUILERIES, Jan. 1, 1837."

When the exchange of official compliments was concluded, Alfred de Musset repaired to the palace. The prince received him with open arms and the sonnet in his pocket. He drew the author away into a bay window, that he might read it once more, and then, as if aglow at the perusal, he exclaimed: "I have not yet found an opportunity of showing your verses to the king; but, if you will wait five minutes, I will take them to him now, and, if he likes them as well as I do, I shall tell him that you are here."

The prince went in search of the king. After a quarter of an hour or so, he came back with a disturbed countenance, looking both sorry and embarrassed, and said that the king was not visible just then, but would be so on some future day; which, however, he did not fix. Alfred felt sure that the sonnet had been read, and that it had not given pleasure; and he begged the prince to tell him what it was in his verses which had offended the royal ears. The Duke of Orleans acknowledged with a blush that it was the familiarity, — the *tutoiement.* "I should have guessed a thousand times before guessing that," replied the poet, blushing in his turn.

The school friends parted in equal consternation. When my brother had repeated to me this strange conversation, we proceeded to re-read the sonnet together; and I asked myself if it were possible that the king —

a man of intellect and culture — had really been offended by language which Boileau might have addressed to Louis XIV. It did not seem so ; and the probability is that the prince, in his youthful impetuosity, had disturbed his father by appealing to him at an inconvenient time. The king heard with a divided attention, and sent his son off, on the first pretext which occurred to him. The prince bore himself gallantly in the matter towards his former comrade, and had him invited to the palace balls. A singular circumstance afterwards occurred, which proved that, when the sonnet had been shown to the king, the Duc d'Orléans, perceiving that it had not made a good impression, had the good taste not to mention the writer's name. On the day when he was actually presented, Alfred perceived that Louis Philippe looked pleased at the mention of his name. "Ah," said the king, coming forward as though agreeably surprised, "you are from Joinville. I am very glad to see you."

Alfred was far too well bred to betray the slightest astonishment. He made a reverential bow ; and, as the king passed on to address some one else, he cast about him to discover the meaning of the words which he had just heard, and the smile which accompanied them. It then occurred to him that we had at Joinville a cousin, a very accomplished and delightful man, inspector of forests on the private domain, and fully worthy of that genial welcome. The monarch had forgotten his son's school-days, and the names of the children who had visited him at Neuilly ; but he remembered perfectly the condition and aspect of his own estates. The name of De Musset represented to him an inspector, a trust-

worthy overseer of his own woods, by whom he set great store, and very properly. Throughout the last eleven years of his reign, he saw once or twice every winter the face of the supposed inspector of forests, and continued to bestow upon him smiles fit to arouse the envy of more than one courtier, and which passed, it may be, for compliments to poetry and belles-lettres. It is certain, however, that Louis Philippe never knew that there lived, during his reign, a great poet who bore the same name as the inspector of his woods.

PART THIRD.

FROM 1837 TO 1842.

XI.

THE contempt of literature which the sovereign unconsciously testified by his gracious words and smiles did not amuse Alfred de Musset as much as it might have done; for his thoughts would recur to the days of Louis XIV., and he felt with keen regret the difference between the two eras. In vain I reminded him that, in our time, the public is the true Mæcenas. The indifference of the chief of the nation weighed on his heart. He was ashamed of it, and unwilling to allude to it, save in the chimney-corner. Yet the kind attentions and affectionate expressions of the Prince Royal were some consolation. He observed one day that there was a prince who would bring to the throne other ideas than those of Louis Philippe. In fact, the Duc d'Orléans had a confidential conversation with his school friend, in which he expressed his views very freely about his father's politics, and the isolated position of France between the unfortunate nations whose cause she had abandoned, and those foreign governments which were ever hostile and suspicious. The prince did not hesitate to hint at war as a very probable event of the first year of his own reign. He even quoted, apropos of his remark, a speech of Fantasio's. "We will make a trip to Italy, and enter Mantua with no other torches than our swords. And when peace is

concluded," added the prince, "we will proceed to amuse ourselves. We will give employment to the poets and artists, and you shall write verses and come and read them to us."

In the midst of these discussions, the Princess Hélène arrived from Germany. With what pomp the marriage was celebrated is well known. Amid the vast galleries of Versailles, Alfred dreamed of a future, fairer, and worthier of a great nation than the epoch of the golden mean, and peace at any price. His imagination, "sensitive as the magnetic needle," discerned afar a new Renaissance of arts and letters, a brilliant and chivalrous reign. At twenty-six, such dreams were in order, and their entertainment seemed justified by the purposes and opinions of the Prince Royal, the noble character of the Duchesse d'Orléans, and the remarkable talents of the Princess Marie. Side by side with the old court there was growing up, in the *salons* of the heir-apparent, another younger and more vivacious court, graced by the fair and fascinating figure of a new Margaret of Valois. Alfred wished to prepare himself for the advent, nearer or more remote of that splendid era, which would, he believed, give a name to the nineteenth century. He applied himself more zealously than ever before to the polishing and perfecting of his works, and the care of his reputation. During the years of 1837–38, he worked calmly, without any undue excitement; still under the inspiration of his heart, for he could not do otherwise, but of a freer, happier heart than his had formerly been. He bore the vexations of life more patiently; he preferred being shut up among his books. As he says him-

self in the "Nuit d'Octobre:" "Oh days of labor, sole days when I have lived! Oh! thrice blessed solitude!"

And, since this happy mood impelled him to works requiring patient application, he resolved to write a series of novels; no less for the public and his friends, than for the future court of Francis I. and the Queen of Navarre. Having stimulated his enthusiasm for the story-teller's art by reading once again the charming tales of Boccaccio, he desired himself to display that talent for narration with which he had not yet been credited. The "Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle," had been more of an impassioned appeal than a romance. In order to give variety to his works, he resolved to add another prose volume. Ever since the 18th of August, 1836, he had had an engagement in writing with the "Revue des Deux Mondes," to furnish that periodical a society novel. The subject which he intended to treat was that of "Emmeline;" but when time had removed that episode of his experience into the perspective of the past, he perceived that his own sorrow had magnified it. Now it resumed its true proportions, which were those of a novelette; and he promised to fill out the proposed volume with other tales of the same sort, if the first were well received.

Suddenly, a wholly different subject occurred to him. Among the little tokens which he was always receiving, there had been a net purse with no name attached, the giver of which he had never been able to divine. After having suspected all the ladies of his acquaintance, he drew from his conjectures the subject of a picture of Parisian life. This was the origin of the "Caprice."

Wishing to produce a fresh type of the perfect woman of the world, he took for a model his godmother, although she had nothing whatever to do with the adventure of the net purse. The conception of Mme. de Léry occurred to him, with her gayety, her malice, her picturesque language, her keen wit, her seemingly frivolous character. There are very few women in any land capable, like Mme. de Léry, of using in the interests of morality the whole arsenal of coquetry; of doing a good deed as one makes an April fool, and extricating herself completely from a dangerous situation, with as much cleverness as grace. If, however, the thing is possible anywhere, it is in Paris; and that clearly outlined figure has been accepted as the perfect picture of a Parisienne *par excellence.* Those who think the portrait flattered are free to consider that charming creation, Mme. de Léry, as the author's tribute of gratitude to those women of Paris whose suffrages he has always received.

When the "Revue" published the "Caprice" (June 16, 1837), it was talked about in the *salons;* but the literary world at large affected to disregard it, as though with a somewhat ill-natured sense that the appreciation of such a sketch did not come within its province. The author did not trouble himself about this silence, but proceeded to write "Emmeline," which was completed in a few days, and the MS. of which he delivered to the printer with some slight reluctance. This was, in fact, his first genuine romance. He had undertaken to arouse interest and move the hearts of his readers by the simple story of a disappointment in love and a sacrifice to

reason and duty. Left to his own resources, the poet of youth found that in attempting merely to talk well without rhetoric he encountered an entirely new test. The moment his story was out, his family and friends reassured him completely about the result of the experiment, and the "Revue" called for more tales. He at once commenced the little story of the "Deux Maîtresses," which, in his modesty, he still regarded as an experiment. After having depicted himself in Valentin, he paused. The incidents which he proposed to recount had not happened to himself, although he had long before found himself in a situation very like that of the hero. How could he impart an air of truth to a tale the subject of which must seem paradoxical to so many people? That it is possible to love two women at one time could not, as his godmother remarked, be doubted by Prince Phosphor; but to prove it by an example was not so easy. The first six pages of the "Deux Maîtresses" were strewn about his writing-table. The wavering author had planted Valentin on that spot, and gone off with his friend Tattet. He chanced upon a *bouillote* party, lost his money, and came back and shut himself up in his chamber a sadder man. He was even sulky the next morning when his mother brought him a great bunch of roses in a glass of water, and set them down before him, saying, "All those for four sous!" His mother stole softly away, and Alfred felt the tears come into his eyes. "Ah," said he, "here at least, is something true! I can't go wrong if I write what I have really felt."

He wrote that page about the pleasures of the poor,

which finishes the first chapter of the novel. Once reconciled with his subject, he worked all day long, and boldly undertook to present, under the form of candid recital, the romantic scenes and events which had taken place in his own imagination only. He did not, however, quite finish his little romance, and the new detention occurred on this wise.

To conceive a novel, to imagine a fable, and arrange the plan of it, had been the affair of an hour of fireside chat; but Alfred realized with impatience how slowly the manual labor advanced. Often he would be dreaming of a poetical subject, even while he was writing prose. He even maintained that this twofold exercise of the faculties was rather profitable than injurious to both efforts. Knowing perfectly well beforehand what he wanted to say in prose, he economized the time required to put the words upon paper by turning over in his head a new idea. It was, he said, like turning your eyes to a more distant star, in order to see more clearly the sparkle of the nearer one. Moreover, a chance occurrence recalled him to poetry. One evening, after a long conversation with a lady who was really frankness and kindness personified, he began to suspect her — I do not know why — of deceit and hypocrisy. Convinced almost immediately of the injustice of his suspicions, he sought within himself for the origin of his odious distrust, and fancied he detected the cause of it in that first occasion of his life when he had come in contact with treachery and falsehood.

Even while he related the loves of Valentin and Mme. Delaunay, he was dreaming of early memories and

sorrows now gone by. As his reminiscences became more poignant, he conceived the idea of a supplement and conclusion to the "Nuit de Mai." He felt in his soul something like a rising tide. His Muse smote him upon the shoulder, and refused to wait. He rose to receive her, and he did well; for she brought him the "Nuit d'Octobre," which is in fact the necessary sequel to the "Nuit de Mai," the last word of a great woe: a perfectly legitimate, as well as a most crushing, revenge; that is to say, — forgiveness. On the 15th of October, the "Revue" published the last of the "Nights;" and, on the 1st of December, the "Deux Maîtresses."

By way of profiting by a mood so favorable to work, Alfred searched among his memories for another romantic subject, and the gay figure of Bernerette, recurred to him. The veritable adventure was somewhat desultory in its action; yet he made of it one of his most attractive and popular stories. Feeling that death alone could expiate the faults of the wayward girl, and soften the reader's heart toward sins of youth for which so severe a penalty was paid, he condemned his heroine to a tragic end. While the true Bernerette was roaming the country, no one knew where, the ideal Bernerette died at twenty; and the amours, begun in laughter and nonsense, finished with despair and suicide.

Like the history of Valentin, that of Frédéric and Bernerette suffered an interruption. The author had long been tormented by the insoluble problem of the destiny of man, and the ultimate aim of life. I used often to find him with his head buried in his hands,

determined by sheer force to pierce the impenetrable mystery, seeking some ray of light, either in the depths of space, or the spectacle of the external world or his own heart; calling on science, on philosophy, on all creation for proofs and way-marks, and finding only systems, reveries, negations, conjectures, and, at the end of all, — doubt.

The subject of his reflections became a fixed idea, he wanted me to discuss it with him, and we were frequently at it until three o'clock in the morning. He read with inconceivable eagerness, the ancients and the moderns, the English, the Germans, Plato, Epictetus, Spinoza, down to M. de Laromiguière himself; and, as may readily be supposed, he found himself none the better. Oftentimes, repelled by the overweening dogmatism of some, and the indecision and obscurity of others, he closed his books, and resumed where he had left it the story of his poor Bernerette. But, on the day when he laid his heroine in her grave, the tears came into his eyes; as he penned the last page his scepticism vanished, and he said a word to me which I shall never forget. "I have read enough," said he. "I have scanned and searched enough! Tears and prayer are essentially divine. It is God who gave us the faculty of weeping, and tears come from Him to us, and prayer returns from us to Him." On the succeeding night he began the "Espoir en Dieu."

The readers of the "Revue des Deux Mondes," when they read in that magazine, with only a month intervening between the dates of their appearance, the history of a grisette, and an invocation to the Creator, can hardly

have suspected the correlation between these two so dissimilar efforts. 'It is certain, however, that the death of Bernerette, by provoking in the heart of the author a fleeting compassion for an imaginary woe, drowned all the philosophies of the world in a single drop of water. The verses on the "Mi-Carême," which immediately followed the above-mentioned publications, furnish a yet more striking proof of the versatility of this young and impressionable mind. One evening, at some ball or other, the cotillon was very ill-managed, and Alfred seized the occasion to pronounce a eulogy on the waltz, which he had been meditating ever after reading in Lord Byron's poems a bitter criticism on the same dance. When he had avenged the "Belle Nymphe aux Brodequins dorés," he returned to his novels.

At the time when he discovered among the memorials of the Italian painters the story of "Andrea del Sarto," he had also been smitten by another subject, too metaphysical to be treated under the form of a drama or comedy, but which he kept in reserve. Encouraged by the manager of the "Revue" to continue his series of novelettes, he looked up among his notes the story of "Tizianello." After mastering an excellent style of painting in his father's studio, — says the history, whether true or false, — the son of the celebrated Titian produced only one work, the portrait of his mistress; but that work was a masterpiece.

In order to enter more completely into the views of his hero, the author adopted them, and maintained this theory, — that one masterpiece is enough for the glory of one man; and that when a genius has once proved

what he can do, he ought to stop there and not lay himself open to the charge of deterioration, like Corneille, Guido, and Titian himself. In our discussions I took the other side, and pleaded the cause of assiduity and fecundity. The obscurity which shrouds the name of Titian's son, and the immense reputation of his father, were all in my favor; but my brother undertook to convert me by the example of his hero, of whom nothing is known except that he had a great deal of talent, and only once condescended to prove it. Of all his brief romances the "Fils du Titien" is undoubtedly the one which was written with most enjoyment and enthusiasm. He was determined to make it a gem, and he added the ornament of two sonnets composed for the occasion, which were supposed to furnish irrefragable proof of the cleverness and poetic talent of the hero, who could be proved a great painter only in writing. The whole month of April was devoted to this effort; and this time, if I remember rightly, no interruptions occurred.

The "Fils du Titien" appeared in the "Revue" for May 1, 1837. Some personal reminiscences may be detected in the episode of the purse, and the behavior of the hero's prodigal son. A good many readers will doubtless be pleased to observe how skilfully some slight reflection from the author's own experience is occasionally introduced in the midst of fictitious circumstances belonging to a remote time. Alfred thought this romance one of his best productions, both by reason of the sonnets which he considered faultless, and of the distinguished character of the subject. He had treated it so conscientiously that he took a six months' rest after

its publication, somewhat after the manner of Tizianello. But the time had not yet arrived for him to take a vow of inaction, and offer reasons for his silence.

One evening his bile had been stirred by a discussion at the café, in the course of which, certain envious persons had more or less vilified every contemporary reputation; and the fancy occurred to him to translate into verse the doctrines which he had been opposing, and so carry war into the camp of his adversaries. The result of this satirical whim was the idyl of "Dupont and Durand."

At the house of the Duchesse de Castries, Alfred de Musset met an extremely beautiful woman who had just read the "Espoir en Dieu," and complimented him highly on the beauty of its versification. He replied lightly, but with the utmost respect, that he was sorry he could not wear so delightful a compliment, like a flower in his button-hole. The lady went into the country the next day; but, a few days later, Alfred received an envelope containing a little bouquet of white flowers, tied with a thread of silk. He was not the man to allow so graceful an attention to pass unnoticed, and he replied by the verses "To a Flower." Afterwards he saw the lady again at long intervals, and her beauty was always one of his great admirations. She died young, while still beautiful and very much the fashion; and her death was a sudden and terrible one.[1]

Pauline Garcia had recently arrived in France, a mere child, but already famous. She had been heard but once in Paris, at the Belgian minister's; the second time she

[1] She was accidentally burned. — P. M.

was to appear at a musical matinée at the house of Alfred's godmother, before an audience composed of genuine *dilettanti.* Prince Belgiojoso was there, and so was Deasaüer, a composer of much talent, who died shortly afterwards in Germany. Mlle. Garcia began by singing Deasaüer's lovely air, "Felice Donzella," in D minor. The author accompanied her himself. I fancy I can still feel the thrill of delight which ran through the audience at the opening measures. We declared that it was the voice of Malibran herself, but with more freshness, more compass, a more velvet smoothness, and without that slight hoarseness which never quite wore off under a quarter of an hour. Of course, our excitement reacted on the youthful singer, and the applause nerved her up to such a degree that she remained a long while at the piano, resisting her mother's attempts to draw her away. After Deasaüer's piece, came an air of Bériot's and then one of Costa's, and finally the whole repertory of boleros and ariettas. The connoisseurs were simply ravished at the marvellous compass of that voice, the quality of tone, the excellence of her method. Meanwhile, Alfred de Musset, presented by his godmother, undertook to converse with the young girl on the highest themes of art, and found her — so he liked to say — as deeply versed as any old professor. He came home from that *séance* in the highest spirits, repeating over and over again, "Oh, what a glorious thing genius is! How fortunate we are to live in a time when it still exists, and we can observe it closely!" Just as though he had not been full of it himself!

Subsequent talks with Pauline Garcia about music and the stage confirmed him in the conviction that, by care and prudence, she might become the worthy successor of Malibran. That year (1836) was a year of high hopes. Of course, there must be an idolized singer for the future court of France and that æsthetic revival to which we were all looking forward. Chance had ordained that she should be of the blood of the Garcias. It was a clear case of predestination. Two new events occurred which added lustre to the promises of the future, — the birth of the Comte de Paris, and the advent of Mlle. Rachel. In the early days of August, the booming of cannon informed the populace of the safe delivery of the Duchesse d'Orléans. There were already two generations of heirs to the crown of July. Alfred was moved to testify to the prince who had honored him with his friendship his own participation in the happiness of the royal family. He composed some verses on the subject that very day, and the tribute was finished before we learned from the "Moniteur" what were to be the names and titles of the newcomer. His father desired to place him under the special protection of the city of Paris.

Three days after the birth of the prince, on the first of September, 1838, the "Revue des Deux Mondes" published some stanzas, to which the friends of the author called the attention of the Duc d'Orléans; and a messenger from the palace brought to the poet a pencil-case ornamented with a diamond. It has been said, in several of the more or less trustworthy notices which have appeared since Alfred de Musset's death,

that the place of Librarian of the Department of the Interior was given him in reward for his verses on the birth of the Comte de Paris. This is not exactly true. The place became vacant, and the minister offered it to M. Buloz. The manager of the "Revue des Deux Mondes" thought best to decline it, but suggested instead one of his associates. After assurances that the appointment would be a good one, he gave the name of his candidate.

It is hardly necessary to say that the minister had not read so much as a line by the writer recommended. He knew something by hearsay of the "Ballad to the Moon," and characteristically remarked to M. Buloz, "I have heard some talk about the *dot over an i*, and I thought it a rather hazardous expression. I should not wish to compromise myself."

When Alfred heard of the steps kindly taken by M. Buloz, he requested the support of the Duc d'Orléans. The prince promised to intercede with the minister, who had already another person in view. Then came six weeks of parleying. M. Edmond Blanc was somehow mixed up in it. Finally, on the 19th of October, the appointment was signed, and the author of the *dot over an i* became the Librarian of the Department of the Interior.

At that time there was living next us, in the same house, a certain physician, a very accomplished man, and professor of lithotrity, with whom Alfred liked to talk about physiology and medicine.[1] One day our

[1] His name was Léon Labat, and his destiny a strange one. During a journey to the East, on which his wife had accompanied him, he cured the

neighbor brought in from the country an exceedingly pretty little serving-maid, about fourteen years of age, in the costume and head-dress of her native village. With the doctor's permission, Alfred questioned the child and made her tell him her story. She had not very much to say; but Alfred treasured in his memory a great store of conversations with children and young girls, having a positive adoration for innocence and ingenuousness. The image of the farm of Clignets, forgotten for almost twenty years, recurred to his mind. This furnished him with a landscape, and his poetic imagination supplied the rest. The fable was composed; and, on the first of October, the "Revue" published the story of "Margot."

Just at that moment, there dawned upon us one of those geniuses who sway the world. A child of seventeen had restored tragedy to life, — tragedy which had apparently been buried for ever in the tomb of Talma. It seemed as if this maiden had suddenly discovered the true meaning of verses which the whole world knew by heart. The attempt to rejuvenate, by a new interpretation, consecrated and even antiquated masterpieces, if

Shah of Persia of a chronic kidney complaint, which had been pronounced incurable. The Shah would not part with him; appointed him his own physician-in-chief, and loaded him with honors, decorations, and gifts. M. Labat consented to reside in Persia: but he did not forget his native land; and his ascendancy over the mind of the Shah became very serviceable to the Frenchmen resident in the domains of that prince. On a certain occasion, some French and English merchants were disputing about privileges, and M. Labat caused the balance to incline to the side of his compatriots. Shortly afterward he was poisoned by his servants. He treated his own case, and very skilfully, but his health was ruined. He returned to France, arranged his worldly affairs, and went calmly to Nice to die, persuaded that he was the victim of British vengeance. — P. M.

made by a great artist, always succeeds. The public taste readily goes back a hundred and fifty years, although it is equally ready to resume upon the morrow its onward motion. Mlle. Rachel had but to open her Corneille and Racine, and her fortune was at once assured. After she had twice or thrice lifted up her voice in the desert where the faithful guardians of tradition preach, she found one night a few attentive listeners. The tidings were whispered from one to another. The newspapers, unwilling to be behindhand, made haste to announce the new planet. All Paris flocked in, with a curiosity which soon became enthusiasm; and it was decided that tragedy must still exist, since we had undoubtedly a great *tragédienne*.

Alfred de Musset was one of the first to recognize the genius of Mlle. Rachel. For two months he did not miss a single one of her representations, and the very first day I heard him joyously exclaim: "We have two Malibrans instead of one! Pauline Garcia has a sister!" As might have been expected, the classicists raised shouts of triumph. They made haste to proclaim that the resurrection of a class of works long since abandoned was the death-warrant of others which had recently been introduced upon the stage. The romanticists, on their part, dissembled their fears, insisted that the public was beside itself, and that the phantom of tragedy would speedily return to its grave. Alfred de Musset thought there was as much of injustice and unreason on one side as on the other, and he undertook to reconcile the contending parties. He published a dissertation in which he argued that tragedy and the

romantic drama could perfectly well exist side by side, and need ask nobody's leave to live. When he had defined the character of the young actress's genius, and demonstrated that *genius* was neither too ambitious nor too flattering a word to be applied to her, the author approached the literary question. He began by assuring the romanticists that they need not hope for the speedy disappearance of the new craze for tragedy; but neither did he allow the classicists to count upon the utter annihilation of the class which dispenses with the unities. He then took a rapid survey, both of antique tragedy and that of the seventeenth century, and showed how they were severally adapted to the tastes of Athens and Versailles. But now that all theatrical conditions were changed, the author expressed the hope that we might see a third variety of dramatic compositions, more in harmony with our own manners than either, and partaking of the qualities both of antique tragedy and the modern drama. He briefly sketched the plan of a new poetic school, and closed as follows: "These are the questions which I would like to propose to those writers who are justly in high favor among us, provided any of them are induced, as they probably will be, by the talent of the young artist who has restored the honors of the old repertory, to arrange a new part, specially for her."[1]

No one, however, profited by this poetical proclamation, which might have aroused the antique Muse without sacrificing to her the conquests of modern art. The

[1] "On Tragedy considered with reference to the *Début* of Mlle. Rachel," "Revue des Deux Mondes," Nov. 1, 1838.

author of the article himself was alone capable of putting its principles in practice. But it would be a mistake to suppose that he dreamed of saying to himself, "Do *you* write a tragedy for Mlle. Rachel." The pitiable insults of the Odéon pit had for ever banished the thought of the theatre from his head. Moreover, he was not one of those who, when they see an artist in high favor, have no scruple about thrusting forward their own talent, for the sake of attaching their fortunes to hers. He never would have thought of writing a part for Mlle. Rachel, unless she had begged him to do so. This did actually happen twice, as we shall see farther on, and it is exceedingly to be lamented that the project came to nought both times. Let this be added to the other signs of the times, — that any thing fine and good in the way of poetry or art will infallibly fail, provided its success require, I will not say the concurrence of several persons, but even the steadfast accord of two wills. So foreign to the modern imagination are all save monetary and material rewards! The great tragic actress herself did not escape the malady of her age, as the close of her career plainly shows. But nobody foresaw this at the point which we have now reached.[1]

When the article in the "Revue" appeared, Rachel had already restored to the stage five works out of the old repertory; namely, "Cinna," "Horace," "Andromaque," "Mithridate," and "Tancrède." During the last days of November, she added a sixth to this list, and appeared in the part of Roxanna. This time the journals all agreed in charging her with the grave blunder of having

[1] This page was written in 1862.

attempted a part which did not suit her. Her friends were more alarmed than she was herself, her only sentiment being one of anger. Precisely because he was not a professional critic, Alfred thought he ought to undertake her defence. He had no difficulty in showing that Rachel had displayed in Roxanna the same qualities and the same genius, as in her previous parts, and that here, as always, her peculiar conception of the character had brought out novel effects. He then asserted that, if she had made her first appearance in "Bajazet," the critics would have smothered her with praise, and poured out upon her devoted head all the riches of their complimentary vocabulary. But Roxanna was her sixth impersonation; and there was the difficulty, — epithets were exhausted. There were no more compliments in the bin; and, after we have admired, it always looks well to show ourselves doubtful and difficult to please. "And this," said the author, "is the way judgment is pronounced; at least, in the newspapers."

The ill-humor of the Monday papers was diverted from the actress to her champion; but Alfred was not disconcerted, for the public was of his mind.[1] The performances of "Bajazet" attracted the same crowds as the former tragedies had done, and the incensed Roxanna was avenged by their applause. Rachel continued as long as she lived to play that beautiful part, notwith-

[1] On the 6th of December, 1838, Jules Janin published in the "Journal des Débats," an attack on the defenders of Mlle. Rachel, in which he called Alfred de Musset a third-class poet. The same critic had the audacity to set up above Rachel a certain Mlle. Maxime, long since entirely forgotten. There is no excuse for enormities of this kind which are not committed in good faith. — P. M.

standing the charitable advice which she had received to abandon it; and those who persisted, whether for the sake of making themselves notorious or from whatever motive, in waging an impious and cruel war upon this highly gifted woman so long as she lived coined money afterwards over the body of the dead Rachel, strewed her grave with artificial flowers, and shed above it tears adulterated by speculation.

Amid this breaking of lances, by virtue of which Alfred lived absorbed in the happy life of art, he was informed that Mlle. Garcia was to sing in a concert at the Théâtre de Renaissance (at present the Italian theatre, Place Ventadour). Ever since the musical *matinée* to which the godmother had bidden us, some twelve or fifteen admirers of this precocious genius had formed among ourselves a defensive league to assist her first public appearance in Paris. Among the more ardent members of this band, were MM. Maxime Jaubert, counsellor in the Court of Appeals, Berryer, Auguste Barre, the sculptor, Prince Belgiojoso, Baron Denier, Alfred de Musset, and his brother, and a number of society men, who by their position, knowledge, and authority might exercise a considerable influence. We embraced every opportunity, not merely of hearing Pauline Garcia sing, but of conversing with her. We informed ourselves about the young girl's purposes; we were absorbed in her interests, which were to some slight extent our own, since we were determined to attract her to Paris and detain her there. In order to render her stay agreeable, we must secure her a success proportionate to her talent. When she deigned to con-

sult us, we weighed the *pros* and *cons* of every question with extreme solicitude, and highly approved in these consultations the prudence, experience, and good sense of her mother, the widow of the great Garcia.

Summoned by circulars, we attended the concert in the Théâtre de Renaissance, some time in December, 1838. The sister of Malibran was disposed to be satisfied. She did not need the assistance of her friends. The public applauded her with a fervor which detracted nothing from the regrets bestowed on Malibran. Alfred de Musset was not able to be present at the concert, but he called on the young *cantatrice* at her lodging, and she sang him the whole programme. In an article in the "Revue," he said with his customary modesty that he was no musician, but gave proof of a profound feeling for the art of which he professed ignorance. I do not think that the talent of Pauline Garcia was ever more justly defined and appreciated than in those six pages of the "Revue des Deux Mondes." For the three months that he had been pleading the cause of the youthful Muses of tragedy and song, the sincere and impartial critic only had appeared. It was time for the poet to take his turn, and a very simple incident effected it.

Alfred has himself told the story in an article in the "Revue des Deux Mondes" for January 1, 1839, which closes with a well-known piece of verse addressed to Rachel and Pauline Garcia.

"Unhappily," said the too modest poet, "it is not for me to follow these gifted young creatures."

But who should follow them if not he? He might have said: "It is not for me to follow them, but to take

them by the hand, and lead them into the right way of art and beauty and truth." But the sigh of regret which he heaved was perfectly sincere. The meaning of it was, "Ah, if I were only thought worthy, how gladly would I employ my talents in the service of such interpreters!"

So ended the year 1838, the most prolific and the happiest year of my brother's life, because it was the richest in illusions.

But there was something beside the poetic amours, the artistic pleasures, and the triumphs which I have detailed. His happiness could not have been complete, if the heart had not had its share therein. Ever since 1837, Alfred had met often in society a very young and very pretty woman of an enthusiastic and impassioned nature, and occupying an independent position, — one who actually bought the works of poets, although it was not then the fashion to do so. They talked together in Parisian drawing-rooms. They corresponded during a necessary absence of hers in the provinces.

The correspondence was literary when it began. Afterwards it became lover-like. I have seen fragments of it which might belong to the series of the Portuguese letters.

The frank and loyal spirit of the lady was something so new to Alfred that he was deeply enamored of it. The connection lasted two years, during which there was neither quarrel, nor storm, nor coolness of any kind, nor any occasion for jealousy or offence; and this is why there is no story to be told about it. Two years of unclouded love are not to be described. Real happiness has no history.

XII.

ONE evening in the month of January, 1839, after a good day's work, Alfred counted in my presence the pages of his novel of "Croisilles," which he had just completed. When he had estimated approximately the number of pages in the "Revue" which the MS. would fill, he exclaimed: "*Finis prosæ!*" I asked him what he meant.

"I mean," he said, "that anybody can tell a love story more or less charmingly, although there is a difference between Boccaccio and the light-literature column. But since I can express myself in a language not spoken by the first man you meet, I wish and intend to confine myself to that."

I respected his scruples, and the only argument in favor of prose-writing which I brought forward was the pecuniary one.

"Just look," he rejoined, "at those two inspired young girls, whose *débuts* we have just watched with so keen an interest. *They* would never disown their vocation. *They* could not be turned out of their course by any pecuniary offer whatever. Pauline Garcia would not take an engagement at the Opéra Comique. Rachel would not deign to recite a bit of melodrama. I propose to follow my own line as they do."

He proceeded to read me his novelette of "Croisilles," which I thought charming, although it evidently required

one more scene, which was so clearly foreshadowed that it seemed impossible to relinquish the thought of it. After taking the old aunt of Croisilles in a hired carriage to the financier's, to request the hand of his daughter, he should not have stopped there. Why not portray the old lady's grand airs, the father's excitement, then the cooling of the good man's wrath, the change of his ideas from black to white, and finally his granting through vanity what he had once refused from pride. There was a comic situation all outlined, which it would scarcely have taken him two hours to fill out. But nothing would induce the naughty boy to attempt it. "No," he persisted, "I have decided, and I shall not go back." "Croisilles" came out on the fifteenth of February, 1839, and when the author was criticised for the abruptness of its termination, he only rubbed his hands and repeated, "*Finis prosæ!*"

He was paying attention at that time to a female artist of talent, who treated him with a hardness and lack of confidence the more inexplicable because he had done her genuine service. I did not understand, until a long time afterward, why it was that this exceedingly clever woman should have allowed herself to entertain a prejudice against a man whose poetic gallantries might have made her immortal. Her unjust and inexplicable sternness mortified Alfred de Musset, and in a moment of spite he wrote the stanzas to Mademoiselle ——— which begin, "Oui, femme, quoi qu'on puisse dire." But this terrific reproach was not his last word; for the ensuing year he addressed to the same person the verses entitled "Adieu," in which his anger appears

greatly softened. At the actual moment of separation, the poet could feel nothing but regret. Moreover, neither of these poems was sent to its address, and the lady who inspired them may have read them ten years later without recognizing them. Alfred always communicated these personal poems to his godmother, who was the depositary of his inmost thoughts, and gave her copies of them. On the morrow, he was agitated about something else. Two other pieces of the same sort, which he composed in the spring of 1839, are probably still hidden away in ladies' drawers, and will come to light some day, if Heaven pleases.

Alfred continued anxiously to watch the progress of the two *noble children*, as he called Rachel and Pauline Garcia. On the twenty-sixth of March, the godmother issued a circular letter inviting all her friends to be present at the "Théâtre du Gymnase Dramatique," at a performance given for the benefit of Mme. Volnys, at which Mlle. Garcia was to sing with Mme. Damoreau. A few days later, Mlle. Garcia left for England; and the London papers soon apprised us that she had made her first appearance there in the part of Desdemona. A letter addressed to the godmother, and shown to us, contained the following passage: —

"The public wanted the air 'Che Smania,' in the second act, repeated. But I would not interrupt the dramatic action, and kept straight on. I contented myself with coming before the curtain. In the third act, they were determined to make me repeat the *romanza* of the 'Willow,' and the 'Prayer.' How could I? I should have had to have a glazier come to Othello's house and mend the broken pane of glass, that he might break it anew! So, in spite of the uproar of *encores*, I would not stop."

Alfred was never weary of lauding the courage and conscientiousness of this inexperienced young girl, more preoccupied with the right rendering of her piece than with her personal success, and coping thus with the London public on the very day of her *début.* He saw foreshadowed the future of another Malibran.

Rachel, all whose performances he attended, interested him no less. One evening in May, he met her in the corridor of the Palais Royal, coming out of the Théâtre Français, and she bore him off to supper along with a band of artists and other friends. In his posthumous works may be read a curious description of that supper. "It was," says the author, "a picture by Rembrandt, and a scene out of Wilhelm Meister in one." Shortly afterward his table was heaped with the works of Sismondi and Augustin Thierry, and he was sketching the plan of the "Servante du Roi." I have told elsewhere why this tragedy was never finished; but when he was at work on the fourth act, — in July, 1839, — it would not have seemed possible that so fine a project should miscarry. Rachel read the monologue of Frédégonde, and from this sample demanded the rest of the piece. While the poet was dreaming over it, his friends, and particularly the manager of the "Revue" reproached him with his silence. His idleness was not without a purpose; nevertheless, it was injurious to his interests.

It is a notorious fact, that none but English editors pay largely for literary wares of a superior quality. With French publications, it is quite otherwise; and quantity is all in all. Remuneration is very slight,

unless one fills a great many pages. Alfred always managed his money matters badly. He knew as little about the balance between his receipts and his expenses, as about the modern science of numbers. The slightest incident, the most fleeting impression, was enough to make the Muse descend; but, if the result did not furnish much matter for the typographers, he got his credit extended, so that the fruits of his labor were often consumed in advance, and when the day of settlement came he experienced a sincere regret. Nevertheless, his novelettes, although they had not occupied much space in the "Revue," had produced sums round enough to be appreciable by the author, and a good many people in his case would have made this fact the basis of a speculation. In him, however, this work, which was better paid than his poetry, occasioned a kind of desperate vexation. It was a case of literary conscience such as no explanation could make quite clear to the men of the present generation.

One day I was trying to persuade my brother to return, at least for a time, to his prose novelettes. I represented to him that his affairs were in confusion, and that the misfortunes of Galsuinde and the ambition of Frédégonde could not set them straight. At first he repudiated the notion of interrupting his historical studies, and diverting the current of his ideas; but afterwards he became alarmed at the thought that his immense credits were about to be converted into pressing debts. Two or three tales might serve as a solution of all his difficulties. Alfred consented to look over his notes with me, and there he found the sketch, in six lines, of a brief

romance, the hero of which was Christopher Allori, the Florentine painter. He instantly warmed to this subject, which was really very fine. We had been talking it over for an hour when M. Felix Bonnaire came in. He came, at a venture, to ask for something, either in prose or verse for the "Revue;" expecting only the habitual response, "I neither have hatched, nor will I hatch, any thing, O Bonnaire!" Hence he was agreeably surprised when he heard of the project which we had been discussing. Alfred felt that he was perfectly safe, when he promised in writing to furnish three novelettes in three months; and M. Bonnaire departed, pleased at having secured some pages of printed matter for the "Revue." Alfred congratulated himself on being free from two importunate creditors; and I was delighted to think that the "Fils du Titien" would soon have a worthy pendant.

But in the night the wind changed. When I went into his room next morning, my brother overwhelmed me with reproaches. "You have turned me," he said, "into a mere thinking machine, — a serf attached to the glebe, — a galley-slave condemned to penal labor!"

He proceeded, in his exaggerated style, to draw a terrible picture of the prose-writer, painfully bending over his table, with two hundred pages in his head, but barely able to produce a dozen in six hours: pausing, exhausted, with red eyes, and fingers stiff with fatigue, and dolorously regarding the scrawl before him, poor product of his day's labor; haunted by the rest he had to say, and appalled at having said so little, and falling from languor into complete disheartenment.

Like the wise father of La Fontaine's young widow, I suffered the torrent to flow on. I then attempted to make the infuriated poet understand that a novel was not to be summoned into existence by a drum-beat; that the "Fils du Titien," "Emmeline," and "Croisilles" itself had been written with too much zest to betray the slightest effort; that facility of execution enhanced the pleasure of the reader; and, moreover, that I had never myself observed the author in that galley-slave condition of which he had drawn so formidable a picture.

"But I very soon should be in such a condition," he replied, "if I listened to you! I need only fulfil the engagements which I have made! Give me back my debts and my creditors! I prefer to be in debt! I will toil and moil when I see fit. Now I am going back to the race-course!"

Convinced that this sublime despair would soon subside, I waited patiently for the return of his working mood. At the end of a fortnight, the poet was less excited, but more gloomy. When his money matters had been arranged in accordance with the aforesaid agreement, he owned that he felt relieved; but did not immediately begin to work, and he would not so much as speak of the painter Allori. I felt positive remorse for having subjected him to the critical alternative of working against the grain, or failing to fulfil his engagement.

As ill luck would have it, Alfred lighted one morning upon a flat magazine-story, in which he detected several gross blunders. With an astuteness which amazes me even now, he divined, three years in advance, that this

new style of literature would bring about a revolution, and seriously corrupt the public taste.

"Read that," he said, handing me the story, "and tell me how long the literature of the imagination is likely to survive, if it goes on stultifying itself and its readers at this rate."

I endeavored to show him that all writers were not jointly and severally responsible for the anachronisms contained in one tale; and that the author of "Emmeline" need not fear being confounded with the fashionable craftsmen.

"Don't you see," he said, "that this *portière* style of literature is evoking a whole new world of ignorant and semi-barbarous readers? I know very well that it will die of its own excesses; but it will first disgust all delicate minds with reading. Meantime, I renounce it. There shall be nothing in common between us, — not even the utensil. I wish I might never touch a pen again. Thank God, a bit of chalk or a burnt match will do to write a verse with!"

The days and weeks slipped by. Felix Bonnaire called from time to time to inquire for the promised novelettes. One day, Alfred said to him: "Come again to-morrow. They will be all done."

Bonnaire gave me an inquiring look; and I signified that I knew nothing at all about it. After he was gone, my brother said: "When a man finds himself in a blind alley, and cannot turn back because he has a sword sticking in him, all he can do is to make a hole in the wall, and go through."

After dinner, during which he said little, Alfred shut

himself up in his room. In the middle of the night, I fancied I saw him come into my room on tiptoe, with a light in his hand; but he did not make noise enough fully to awake me. In the morning when I got up, I remembered the vision; and I glanced toward a certain shelf of my book-case, where I had deposited a pistol-case. The box was gone; but I had taken the precaution to put the caps and the powder away in a bureau drawer, where they still remained.

Alfred came down to breakfast, as usual. He appeared depressed, and made scarcely any reply to my inquiries about his nocturnal visit. A letter was brought him, which he read and re-read. It was from Mlle. Rachel, inviting him to spend some days with her at Montmorency, where she had rented a country-seat. He set forth in high spirits, forgetting to take the pistol-case, which I restored to its place. I do not know what there was in Rachel's note beside the invitation; but it is certain that, during his stay at Montmorency, the poet amused his hostess so well by his disquisitions on the arts, and by talk both grave and gay, that she was very unwilling to have him return to Paris. On his return, still in a happy frame of mind, he wrote a letter to his godmother, in which — contrary to his usual custom of giving a full account to that beloved lady of all the impressions which he received — he hardly alluded to the Montmorency visit, but described some more recent experiences, and wound up with this sentence: "How captivating she was the other evening, running about her garden with her feet in *my* slippers!" I confine myself to quoting this passage, leaving the reader to

draw such deductions as he may choose. He will at least venture to conclude that this incident must have made a pleasing variety in the life of an intellectual galley-slave. A gust of wind seemed to have dispersed all his gloomy thoughts. Nevertheless, the contract with the "Revue" still existed; and, once at home again, the slave felt the ball tugging at his foot. The face of Felix Bonnaire soon reappeared; and, to avoid him, Alfred ran away to the country with M. Berryer, where he met his godmother, and forgot his cares in the society of a large and delightful circle. The manager of the "Revue" was too much his friend sternly to exact the fulfilment of his engagement within the prescribed time; still, it was necessary to give him some sort of satisfaction.

On his return from the Château d'Augerville, Alfred, beset by the memory of his promise, yet unable to surmount his repugnance to keeping it, shut himself up in his own room, and refused to see any one. I saw him only at meal-times, and did not dare ask what he was doing. One day, as he was leaving the table, he said to me, with a strange expression of bitterness and vexation, "You insist upon prose. Well, I will give you some." I besought him to tell me his plans. His writing-table was strewn with manuscript sheets; but there was no title on the first page, and I asked him what his subject was. "You will know presently," he said, "what the name of it is. It is neither a reminiscence, for the story is not precisely my own; nor a romance, for I speak in the first person. There is too much that is imaginary for you to call it a confession, and too much that is true for a mere made-up story. It is a production

without a name. The genuine thing about it is, unhappily, the grief which dictated it, the tears which I have shed while putting it on paper." He then took up his MS., and read me his fantastic performance. The following is the introduction : —

"Although the motive which impels you is sufficiently contemptible (being only an idle curiosity), I will tell you all you wish to know. You are almost a stranger to me, and your sympathy or compassion would be of no use to me whatever. For what you may say I care still less, for I shall never know it. Yet I will show you the depths of my heart as frankly and fully as if you were one of my dearest friends. You need be neither surprised nor flattered by this. I carry a load which is crushing me ; and, when I talk to you, I give it a preliminary shake, before casting it off for ever.

"What a story I could tell you, if I were only a poet! Here, in the midst of this wilderness, in view of these mountains, what would not a man like Byron say, if he had my sufferings to describe! What sobs you would hear! And these ice-fields would hear them also. But Byron would talk to you in the open air, on the verge of some precipice. I, gentlemen, propose to close my window. It suits me to converse with you in the chamber of an inn ; and I make use, very properly, of a language which I despise, — a coarse instrument without strings, abused by every chance-comer. It is my business to talk prose, and to tell in the style of the newspapers, between a pallet and a handful of fagots, the tale of an ineffable, unfathomable grief. I like to have it so. It suits me to drape with rags the sad romance which was my story, and to fling into the corner of a hovel a fragment of the sword which was broken in my heart.

"Do not suppose that my woes have been of a very elevated kind. They are by no means those of a hero. They would merely furnish the subject of a novel or melodrama. Listen to me as you listen to the wind that whistles in the crack of the door, and the rain which beats against the

windows, — not otherwise. I was a poet, a painter, a musician. My miseries have been those of an artist ; my misfortunes, those of a man. Read as if you were reading your own journal."

There followed the story of a young man of abundant gifts, the spoiled child of an affluent family, who made verses, composed music, and painted pictures for his own pleasure merely, but with success. This part of the narrative was made up out of the experiences of the author's own childhood and youth. By way of exhibiting in the strongest possible light the meanness and vulgarity of his present trouble, Alfred began with the story of his first grief, and the wound which he had received in Italy.[1] An unexpected reverse of fortune suddenly altered the hero's position. Obliged to support a grandmother and four young sisters, he turned his talents to practical account, and began to write novels. His first efforts were successful, and the publishers asked for more. He imposed upon himself a daily stint. His head soon became tired, and his invention was exhausted ; but his necessities were such that he could allow himself no relaxation. He must write, write incessantly. After a year of this torture, the young man lost heart, as will appear from the ensuing scene : —

" One night, — or rather one morning ; for I had written till day-break,— I was seated at my table, having just completed a volume. Not only must I deliver to the printer my pages barely dry, but I must re-read, with my weary eyes on that gray paper, the melancholy result of my vigils. My sisters

[1] Extracts from this portion of his MS. have been given in pages 128–136 of the second part.

were asleep in the next room; and, while I fought with drowsiness, I could hear their breathing through the partition. I was so weary that I felt completely disheartened. Still I finished my task, and, the moment it was done, I buried my head in my hands. I do not know why it was that every respiration of the children filled me with profound sadness. The last chapter of my book had described the death of two lovers. It was hurriedly and carelessly done, like all the rest; and the chapter lay before me. Mechanically, I cast my eyes over it, and a strange association occurred to me. I got up half asleep, took down the poem of Dante from my library, and began to read over the story of 'Francesca da Rimini.' You know that the passage contains not more than twenty-five verses. I read it several times in succession, until the sentiment of it pervaded my entire being. Then, forgetful of my sleeping sisters, I repeated it aloud. When I came to the last verse, where the poet falls to the ground like one dead, I, too, sank weeping upon the floor.

"'Twenty-five verses,' I said to myself, 'may make a man immortal. How? Because he who reads these twenty-five verses, after a lapse of five centuries, if he have a heart, falls down himself and weeps, and a tear is the truest and least perishable thing in all the world. But where do we find these twenty-five verses? Drowned in three poems! They are not the only fine ones, it is true, and they may not be the finest; but they would suffice, by themselves, to save the poet from annihilation. And who knows but their accompaniment, — the three long poems, — and all the thoughts, and all the journeys, and the expatriated Muse, and the ungrateful compatriots, were needful that these twenty-five verses might be found in a book which is not read from beginning to end by two hundred persons in a year? It is, then, the habit of sorrow and toil — it is misfortune, if not misery — which makes the fountain flow; and it is enough (is it not?) if a drop be treasured up. But, if in lieu of this, grief and toil, poverty and custom, combine to dry up the living spring, to degrade and exhaust the man, what becomes of the drop which might

have fallen, — the tear which might have been so fruitful? It will run out upon the pavement and be lost.' " [1]

At this point, the reader paused. His hearer was as much moved as himself, and felt a weight upon his heart. We both kept silence for a few minutes, and then I asked for the rest. After the picture of that night of anguish, came a dissertation on the poet and the prose-writer.[2] The rest was only projected; but this was what was to happen: The hero of the tale, disgusted with hack-writing, turned eagerly to painting, and soon became a tolerably skilful *genre* painter. But he presently found himself confronted by the old difficulties. Family expenses and every-day necessities obliged him often to lay aside his brush for the sake of giving lessons, or to wield the crayon of the lithographer. He went to the Louvre, and wept before the smiling face of the "Joconde," as he had wept before the shade of Francesca da Rimini. The next day, he abandoned painting, planted himself before the piano, and passed whole nights in the study of the great composers. But notwithstanding all his efforts, and two or three triumphal evenings, he could not surpass the common throng of concert musicians. He returned to Paris, and relapsed into obscurity. For the third time, he shed barren tears of despondency while performing on his piano the Requiem of Mozart.

It was during this third night of despair that the artist resolved to emancipate himself by suicide. But, before his death, he desired to prepare some memento

[1] From the "Poëte Déchu."

[2] It appeared in the posthumous volume.

of his passage through life. He wanted, just once, to yield to the impulse of his heart, and to make his last cry of anguish audible to those who had suffered like torments with himself.

With this purpose, he slipped away one morning on the imperial of a diligence, and made his way to Switzerland. There, in the chamber of an inn, he hurriedly wrote a fragment of his own Memoirs. To the tale of his sufferings, he added a few scraps of poetry, the last being a farewell to life. He composed music for these verses; and then opened his box of colors, and took his own portrait.

I demurred a little to the *dénoûment*. The author wanted to carry things to extremes; and either fling his hero over an Alpine precipice, arranging the circumstances so that his death might seem accidental, or simply light a chafing-dish. I objected to so gloomy an ending. It seemed to me an additional wrong to our poor century, already so loudly decried, to represent a young man of the finest gifts yielding to the pressure of undeserved misfortunes, while in the performance of honorable duties. I stated to the author the following dilemma: either the hero will not be thought to have had real talent, or he will be accused of lacking courage and perseverance. To which the poet replied: "It rests with me to prove that he had talent. If his verses are good, and his prose eloquent, that will be enough." We continued to discuss the question, and I expressed a wish that the last three works — the "Farewell to Life," the piece of music, and the portrait, all of them inspired by the same gen-

uine sentiment — might come to the notice of some discerning person, and be recognized as masterpieces.

"But what will you do with the author's modesty?" interrupted my brother.

I replied that the author could very easily vindicate that, if he would only take the trouble.

"I see," he said, "only one way to content you. It would be to introduce upon the scene a young girl travelling in Switzerland with her father. She must have a fine ear, and must hear him singing the 'Adieu à la Vie.' The sentiment of the verses and the accents of the singer will show her that his music is no mere pastime. Poetry, music, and likeness will all appear admirable to her, and the young man himself yet more interesting. The hero will be rescued by love, and I shall escape the charge of fatuity; for the enthusiasm of a woman for her lover's lucubrations does not prove them to be masterpieces."

Without committing himself to this idea, Alfred promised to consider it. But when he said to me, one evening, speaking of Jacopo Ortis, "The world only pities the misfortunes of which one dies," I knew very well that he was reverting to his tragical termination. A few days later, he read me his "Idylle de Rodolphe et Albert;" and asked me whether that bit of verse, if it were slipped in among the papers of his hero, would not suffice to make the reader accept him for a poet. I told him the only trouble was that the "Idylle" was too beautiful, and that people would not readily believe but that such verses might have saved their author.

"And why should they not believe it?" he exclaimed.

"Either I deceive myself, or my creation is a genuine poet; that is to say, a child incapable of working out his own destiny. His pleasure or pain, his success or his wretchedness, depend upon circumstances, not upon his own will. He sings the air which Nature taught him, as the nightingale does; but, when you try to make him sing like a blackbird, he is silent, or he dies. Greater souls than Gilbert or Chatterton have never been appreciated until after their death. When poets are flung into the midst of a distraught or heedless world, they must either get out of it, or become clerks or soldiers, according as the time is one of peace or war. But their contemporaries must answer to posterity for their loss. There have been blunders enough made in that line to justify the addition to the list of one imaginary woe. Moreover, in this romance, I do not accuse society, as I might if I were treating of a historical character, and as Alfred de Vigny very properly did in 'Stello.' The very title must show that I do not intend to enter an action against any one; and this is why I am still deliberating whether I had better call the work the 'Stone of Sisyphus' or the 'Lost Poet.'"

I besought my brother to choose the first title; representing the delight the envious would take in saying that the work was a new "Confession of a Child of the Age." Alfred threw up his head haughtily, and replied, "They would not dare!" But the observation had struck him. He began to look up the numbers of the "Revue," to discover the date of his last contribution; and was frightened to perceive that, since the fifteenth of February, he had worked only for himself. Instead of

reserving for his romance the fine verses which he had just written, he sent them to the manager of the "Revue." This took place in the last days of September. The "Idylle" appeared on the first of October, and that night the poet slept serenely.

We had just heard a piece of news highly important to the *dilettanti*, — the engagement of Pauline Garcia at the Théâtre Italien. The management of this theatre had been intrusted to M. Viardot; and, in consequence of the burning of Favart's Hall, the first performance was to take place at the Odéon. Pauline Garcia made her *début* in "Othello," and her friends were all at their posts; but, before the close of the second act, Malibran's younger sister might have counted on the entire audience as her friends. Alfred de Musset wanted to have his say about this performance; and I would recommend to curious readers his analysis of the genius of Pauline Garcia, written in 1839. There are niceties of detail about it, which would apply perfectly to the interpretation of Glück's masterpieces in 1861.

The differences between Malibran's Desdemona and Pauline Garcia's were noted with rare acumen. It was not because custom prescribes a stint of praise in such cases, that the author allowed himself to offer the young *débutante* some advice; but because the advice was good and needed.

"The moment," he said, "in which she falls on the floor, when repulsed by Othello, is a painful one to some persons. Why need she fall? There used to be an easy-chair at hand, and the *libretto* says merely that Desdemona faints. I do not lay any very great stress

on this point; but these striking effects, these sudden sensational turns, are so much in fashion nowadays, that I think we ought to be cautious about them. Malibran made frequent use of them it is true. She fell, and always did it well; but now the boulevard actresses have also learned how to fall, and Mlle. Garcia appears to me better fitted than any one else to demonstrate that, if one can succeed without such means, one ought to avoid them."

Where did Alfred de Musset learn that there "used to be an easy-chair at hand"? I do not know; but he was right, for I find among his papers a letter from Mme. Garcia, dated Nov. 2 (his article came out on the first), in which the widow of the great Garcia expresses herself thus: —

"The article is charming; the criticism excellent. We shall try to profit by its good suggestions; and, first of all, we will have the arm-chair at the next performance, although Emilia says, 'Al suol giacente;' that is, lying on the ground or the floor. But no matter. My poor husband used to enter, absorbed in jealous and heart-rending reflections. He flung himself into a chair of some sort — whatever they had in those days — and when he rose, he turned it, without appearing to do so, in such a manner, that Pasta might drop into it naturally. But enough for the present."

Always afterwards, Mlle. Garcia fainted in the arm-chair, and left to other Desdemonas, who felt much less keenly than she, exaggerated movements and carefully studied falls. If the article in the "Revue" had done no more than this, it would have been something: but in the closing paragraph the author gave both the young actress and the French public some advice which they

would have done well to heed; and which, though originally put in the form of a wish, has since assumed the character of a prophecy:—

"And what is to become of Pauline Garcia? There is no more doubt about her future. Her success is established, proved. All she can do now is to mount higher. But what will she do? Shall we keep her with us, or will she, like her sister, appear in Germany, England, and Italy? Shall she roam the world for the sake of a few handfuls of louis, more or less? Shall we award her fame, or will she seek it elsewhere? What is a reputation, after all? Who makes it? What determines it? This is what I asked myself the other evening, as I left the Odéon after witnessing that triumph, after I had seen so many tearful eyes and agitated faces in the hall. I beg pardon of the pit which clapped so bravely. My question is not addressed to that. I ask your pardon, too, fair ladies in the proscenium, who dream so fondly of the airs you love, and tap your gloves sometimes; and who, when your hearts thrill to the accents of genius fling lavishly your fragrant bouquets! Nor was I thinking so much of you, O subtile connoisseurs, fine folk who know every thing, and are consequently amused by nothing! I was thinking rather of the student and the artist, of the man who, as they say, has only a heart and but little ready money; who comes here once of a Sunday, for an extraordinary treat; the man for whom the mere exercise of his intellect is a stimulating and salutary pleasure; the man who needs to see something noble and fine and to weep over it, that he may work gaily on the morrow, and have courage to come again; the man in short who loved the elder sister, and knows the worth of truth."[1]

How much there is in these few words! Was it the fault of the pit, or of the fair ladies, or of the languid connoisseurs? Was it the fault of the young singer her-

[1] Débuts de Mademoiselle Pauline Garcia. Revue des Deux Mondes, Nov. 1, 1839.

self? Which one of all these failed to do his duty, or comprehend his true interests? However it came about, Pauline Garcia went to Russia, and was almost entirely forgotten; and for the fifteen ensuing years we saw other Desdemonas correctly flinging themselves upon the floor, and the Théâtre Italien descending by degrees to what it is to-day. Not until twenty years had elapsed — twenty years of shrieks and simperings and bad taste, in short of radical and complete decadence — did pure art, and simple song, and dramatic music revive one fine evening, in a remote corner of Paris, at the Théâtre Lyrique. Malibran's sister had reappeared in the "Orpheus" of Glück.

While the admirers of Pauline Garcia were reading the article on her Othello, Alfred was writing, with all his wonted facility, the pretty rhymed tale of "Sylvia." When the "Idylle" appeared, the godmother made haste to tell her son what she thought of the piece. Her letter wound up with a friendly reproof, touching the long silence of his Muse. "Idleness," she said, "is lack of courage." Her godson responded gaily and triumphantly to her strictures, in verses which were also given to the public.

I knew nothing of all this when in the "Revue des Deux Mondes" for December 15, I read, on a detached leaf of blue paper, a list of forthcoming contributions, among which Alfred de Musset's prose work was announced, under the objectionable title of the "Poëte Déchu." I could not suppress a gesture of impatience, which my brother observed. He merely pointed with his finger toward the MS. of the tale imitated from

Boccaccio, more than two hundred verses of which were already written. "Look," said he, "that little poem is but half done yet: in three days I shall have finished it. What farther proof do you require of the vigor of my brain? One would never attempt any thing so bold if one thought about envious and ill-natured people."

I replied that I was perhaps too cautious, and that I would defer my opinion to that of Tattet, or the god-mother. Tattet came so often that I did not have long to wait for him. My brother read him the story of the lost poet, and he interrupted him again and again with admiring exclamations. I even saw tears in his eyes.

"Nothing more eloquent has been written," he said, "since the days of Jean-Jacques Rousseau."

When the reading was finished, I left him alone with his friend, and my brother informed him of my objections. Tattet did not think them well founded; but the next day Alfred told me that he had burned several pages of the romance, which was not at all what I wanted. He put the rest away in a box, and said that the prose contained some ideas which would be good to put into verse. The poem of "Sylvia," which appeared on the first of January, 1840, caused the readers of the "Revue" to forget the promise of the previous number. A long while afterward other portions of the MS. were burned, and my brother charged me to destroy whatever remnants of the work he might leave behind him, with the exception of the passages quoted above, for which I earnestly interceded. Twenty odd pages of writing are all that remain of that precious document. They are admirable. I have read them

with deep emotion ; and, if I might give them to the public, I would not hesitate ; convinced that they would reflect no less honor on the character of the man than on the gifts of the writer. But, fine as they are, I have promised ; and they must be destroyed.

XIII.

WE must not smile at the sufferings of the poet. He alone can give his plaints audible expression; but how many there are who suffer like him, yet cannot make it known! How many young souls, forcibly turned aside from their true vocation, have shed by night just such bitter tears as the strains of "Dante" wrung from the author of the "Poëte Déchu!" How many are made unhappy by the very fact that Nature has endowed them with more intellect than belongs to the vulgar! The latter may envy the poet his pangs, his heart-sickness, and his fame; but it is none the less certain that genius is a fatal gift, unless it have the safeguard of enormous vanity. Alfred de Musset had not received from Heaven that infallible defence against the sorrows of the heart and mind; and the incidents related in the last chapter show how unhappy he was. His refusal to publish a work which had been announced by the "Revue" complicated the situation yet more; nevertheless, neither the engagements which he had made, nor my own exhortations to diligence, availed to induce him to return to prose, for which the magazine story had given him an invincible repugnance. "In verse," he said, "a poet may permit himself to offer to the public the truthful expression of his feelings; but, in the language employed by anybody and everybody, he may not!"

The prose manuscript which contained this honest expression of his mind was thrown into a corner; but the author could not dispose of his anxieties after the same fashion. A review is a kind of Minotaur. Of the two hundred verses of "Sylvia," the number for January 1, 1840, made but one mouthful, and three times a week came M. Felix Bonnaire to chat at our fireside. These friendly visits were assuredly those of a most patient and inoffensive creditor; nevertheless, he was a creditor with a mortgage on one's thoughts and feelings and tears. It was in such terms that Alfred invariably described all contracts for future work. I must confess that I thought him extravagant and unreasonable. Like the manager of the "Revue," like Alfred Tattet and the godmamma, I occasionally stigmatized his disdainful silence as laziness or weakness. But we were all wrong. We had not the poet's second sight.

Alfred was always in love as a matter of necessity. When I omit to mention the fact, it may be understood. His twofold admiration for Pauline Garcia and Rachel passed from his intellect into his heart, every time he came out from hearing a performance by either one. This was the time when he should have written the story of Valentin's double passion for the Marquise and Mme. Delaunay. The narrative would then have contained much curious analysis of emotion; but, as it was, the novel was written three years too early. The ideal situation might have been made much finer, because the hero would have been only an *amoureux*, not an *amant*.

The agreeable period of this double attraction came

to an end in the winter of 1840. I perceived that the poet, preoccupied with his engagements, worn out with exhortations to industry, and a trifle disenchanted, no longer wanted to confide his griefs to anybody. At the gay parties to which his friends invited him, he still enjoyed the sprightliness of others, but the animation of Fantasio had deserted him. His depression betrayed itself in all he said, and made itself felt even at our family meals. One evening after we had messed at a restaurant with Tattet and several other friends, — we had had a good dinner and drunk more than was needful, — the feasters left the table, bent upon further amusement; but when they came to look for Alfred he was not to be found. He had escaped, and had been for some hours in my room. I asked him how he had employed his evening. "I have been doing my best," he replied, "to enjoy myself as other people do, and I have only succeeded in stultifying myself. The truth is I am no longer capable of enjoyment."

I asked him what he meant by that; and the reply which he gave struck me as so singular that I requested him to write down the substance of it. It was a piece of advice which I often gave him, and which, unhappily, he very seldom heeded: but this time he probably put his thoughts upon paper before going to bed; for there is certainly a reminiscence of the conversation I have reported in the following lines, which I found among his papers: —

"Pleasure is the exercise of our faculties. Happiness is their exaltation. It is thus that, from the beast to the child of genius, the whole vast creation underneath the sun silently

accomplishes its eternal task. And thus, at the close of a feast, some, heated with wine, seize cards and fling themselves upon heaps of gold under the glare of lamps; some call for horses and ride forth into the forest; the poet arises with eyes aglow, and draws his bolt behind him; while one young man speeds noiselessly away to the home of his mistress. Who shall say which of all these is the happiest? But he who stirs not from his place, and has no part in the whirl about him, he is the least of men, or else he is the most unhappy.

"So goes the world. Among tavern-rovers, some are rosy and merry; some pale and taciturn. Can there be a more painful spectacle than that of an unhappy libertine? I have seen some whose smile would make one shudder. He who would subjugate his soul with the weapons of sense may intoxicate himself indefinitely. He may affect an impassive exterior; he may repress his thoughts by the might of a steadfast will: those thoughts will roar incessantly inside the brazen bull."

The melancholy which inspired such reflections was not easily surmounted. When one has lost the faculty of enjoyment, in the poet's sense of the term, dissipations are of no use. During the carnival, Alfred conscientiously compelled himself once or twice to join the hilarious bands; but he brought back from these excursions nothing but fatigue and a fresh access of despondency.

One day he resolved to begin again, although he felt no inclination to do so. "I am going," he said, "to imitate the late Marshal Turenne. My body refuses to go into battle; but my will shall take it there in spite of itself."

This time Nature rebelled, and he came home with inflammation of the lungs. M. Chomel, although one of the most skilful physicians in Paris, did not form a correct

opinion of the disorder; but took it, at first, for a brain fever. If we had followed his first prescriptions, the mistake might have cost us dear. Fortunately, a mother's instinct, clearer-sighted than science, divined the error and repaired it.

It required no less than three persons, assisted by a sister of charity, to nurse a patient so insubordinate and full of strength. Ten days of sleeplessness and excessive blood-letting seemed only to exasperate him. In one of his rebellious moments, when we were at our wits' end, the godmother arrived. She found her boy sitting up in bed in a transport of rage, and calling loudly for his clothes, that he might go to the baker's, he said, and get some bread, because they would not give him any at home. At first he would not listen; but, by degrees, the persuasions of his godmother quieted him. At last she peremptorily ordered him to lie down, and he obeyed; muttering still, but remaining motionless under the touch of her little hand which hardly covered half his forehead. Princess Belgiojoso, who never missed the opportunity to do a kindness, came also several times and sat by the sick man's pillow, and offered him drink which he dared not refuse from the hand of so great a lady. One day, when he was very sick indeed, the princess said to him with perfect composure: "Be calm. People never die in my presence." He pretended out of gratitude to believe her; but, when she promised to come and see him again, he said quite seriously, "I shall not die on that day."

When his disease was abating, I observed a strange phenomenon. One morning, Sister Marcelline and I

were sitting by my brother's bedside. He appeared calm and somewhat exhausted. Reason was still contending with the delirium occasioned by the loss of sleep and the remains of pulmonary congestion. Visions were flitting before his eyes ; but he took note of all his sensations, and questioned me to enable himself to distinguish real from imaginary objects. Guided by my replies, he analyzed his delirium, observed it curiously, amused himself with it as with a spectacle, and described to me the images which were generated in his brain. By and by, complete pictures were composed, and one of these dissolving views remained fixed in both our memories.

It was then March. The sunshine fell upon the writing-table in the centre of the room which, for the time being, was covered with phials. In spite of its being thus encumbered, the invalid seemed to see the table just as he had left it the day he took his bed, — that is to say, strewn with books and papers with a writing-desk upon it, and pens methodically arranged. Presently four little winged genii snatched up the books, the papers, and the desk ; and, when they had cleared the table, they brought on the phials and medicines in the same order in which they had come from the apothecary's. On the arrival of the famous Venetian potion, which M. Chomel had allowed to be tried, the patient saluted it with his hand in the Italian fashion, and murmured: "Pagello has saved me once more." The other medicines took their actual places ; and, for a brief moment, the dream and the reality were identical. Then, from among the army of phials, arose a champagne-bottle adorned with its metal stamp. It was borne pathetically

upon a litter by two small genii, who assumed for the occasion a subdued and sorrowful attitude. The convoy moved off by an ascending path which wound away into the distance; while by another path a decanter descended wreathed with roses, and surmounted by its crystal stopper. The decanter glided smoothly down the sloping pathway, while the genii scattered flowers before it, and the phials drew themselves up in a double line to receive it, and gave it the place of honor.

After this impressive entrance, the decanter laid aside its wreath, and installed itself modestly upon the mantel. The genii removed the traces of the ceremony, took away the now useless phials, and restored things to their pristine state; so that the recovered poet might find his table in order for work. Each volume and every scrap of paper resumed the place which it had occupied the night before he was taken ill, and the pens arranged themselves symmetrically before the desk. Their duty discharged, the genii departed; but the poet, after inspecting his table, exclaimed, "That is not quite right! There was a little dust in spots, particularly upon that lacquered writing-desk."

The instant that he made this reasonable complaint, he perceived a little man about three inches high with a perambulating *cocoa-seller's* urn upon his back. The Liliputian traversed the desk and books, turning the faucet of his urn, whence issued a fine dust, and in a few seconds the desired order reigned on the table. "That is perfect," said the master, drawing the coverlid over his eyes. "Now I can sleep, and I believe that I am cured."

And so he was; for, when next he woke, his brain had recovered the clearness and tranquillity of its normal condition. He told these particulars to the physician himself, and M. Chomel replied with a smile, "You have had a regular poetical pneumonia. I am convinced that you would never be like the rest of the world, whether sick or well. But try to profit by the advice which you have given yourself. The apotheosis of the decanter will not suffice. You must also remember that nature designed the day for waking, and the night for sleep."

"Your aphorism," Alfred replied, "is not so profound as that of Hippocrates; but I promise you that I will ponder it."

The word *convalescence* does not begin to express the curious state of beatitude in which the poet found himself during his recovery from this illness. It was a veritable new birth. He felt about seventeen, and enjoyed the "pleasures of childhood and the notions of a page," like the cherub in the "Marriage of Figaro." All the difficulties, all the causes of despondency, which had preceded his illness, had vanished, and his horizon was rose-color. In the evening, the family used to assemble around the famous writing-table, to chat or sketch, while Sister Marcelline knitted little jugs out of variegated wool. Auguste Barre, who lived near us, used to come to work upon an album of caricatures in the style of Toppfer's, representing the series of events and catastrophes attendant upon a marriage treaty repeatedly broken off and renewed. All Paris was laughing at it, and one did not need to be a convalescent to find amuse-

ment in these comical drawings. Alfred and Barre wielded the pencil, and the rest of us made up the explanatory text, which was no less absurd than the drawings. The album consisted of fifty-one sketches, more than half of which were from Alfred's hand. It was not without a pang of jealous regret that I saw the prodigal godson bestow on his godmamma these nonsensical productions, which, if I had them now, would recall one of the sweetest periods of our home life. Who shall give us back those delightful evenings of laughter, chatter, and jest; when, without stirring abroad and with no help from outside, our household was so happy?

The convalescent's first sorrow came with the farewell of Sister Marcelline. Not only had the angelic sweetness and devoted care of that saintly girl attached us all to her; but, quite unconsciously, she had acquired a marked ascendancy over the mind of the invalid, by the spectacle of the serenity of spirit which she brought to the discharge of her duties, and by describing to him, with affecting simplicity, some of the events of her life; especially those which had induced her to take the veil. In her eagerness to second the physician's efforts, she advised the patient about the course he ought to pursue; first, for the health of his body, and then for that of his mind. How could he forbid one so pious and so affectionate to interest herself in the religious experience of him whose life she had saved by her devotion? Marcelline used her privilege discreetly, and her gentle entreaties had more effect than those of a doctor of divinity could have had. He assured her that it was so, and she left him well content, — with the promise

that she would pray for him. Always afterwards, when he wanted help, Alfred asked for Sister Marcelline; but, whether by accident or intentionally, she was never sent to him but once. Occasionally, at intervals of several years, she got leave to come out and ascertain the condition of her patient. She would talk with him for a quarter of an hour or so and then flit away. They were angel visits, — unhappily too rare; but they always came so opportunely that Alfred regarded them as marks of the favor of some mysterious and consolatory power.

According to the customary working of his mind, the poet, when bereft of the sister whom he regretted, began to concentrate all his thoughts upon her, until his thoughts became words, and his words took the form of verse. One day he told me that he had composed some stanzas, "To Sister Marcelline," but he obstinately refused to write them out. "These verses," he said, "were made for myself alone. They concern only me, and no one else has a right to them. Why should I not compose a dozen stanzas for my private use, and recite them to myself if I choose. I will repeat them to you once, and you may remember them if you can."

Accordingly, he did so. Tattet heard them also, and besought his friend for a copy, but in vain. Afterwards, another lady, whose care had been no less assiduous than Sister Marcelline's own, repeated from memory a few of these verses. By comparing our recollections, we succeeded with great difficulty in reconstructing four stanzas; but their order is by no means certain. When I owned this misdemeanor to my brother, he was not at all angry; and, since he demanded no promise of secrecy, I

do not see why I should consign to eternal oblivion one of the purest inspirations of his vanished Muse. Here is all I have been able to recover of the stanzas to Sister Marcelline: —

"Poor child, thy beauty is all fled!
Thy nightly vigils by the dead
Have left thee pale as they.
As any delver's of the soil,
Thy hand is hard with loving toil,
Men's anguish to allay.

Yet brave amid its weariness
Beside the pillow of distress,
Thy white brow shineth; and
Full well the wretch whose fevered grasp
Enfolds it, knows how kind the clasp
Of that disfigured hand.

. . . . . .

Pursue thy solitary way,
And step by step, and day by day,
Draw nearer to thy God.
While we bemoan life's cruel ill
Who meanly use our coward skill
To fly the chastening rod.

But naught of evil dost thou know,
And nameless unto thee the foe
With whom thou strivest still.
The strokes thereof cannot harm one
Who hath forgotten how to moan,
Save for another's ill."[1]

[1] There is an allusion to the tender memory left by the care of Sister Marcelline in a letter of Alfred de Musset's to his godmother, dated July 31, 1840. In reply to a previous letter in which the poet had alluded jokingly to his flirtations with several young women, his godmother had asked

Apparently, Sister Marcelline must have obtained from the invalid a promise to engage in some religious exercise ; for, when she went away, she left him a pen on which she had embroidered, in parti-colored silk, the motto, "Think of your promise." Seventeen years later, this pen and one of the little knitted jugs were enclosed in the poet's coffin. It was one of his last requests.

After his recovery, Alfred conceived the desire of writing for Rachel a tragedy of Alcestis. He purchased the drama of Euripides, and applied himself to his Greek, so as to read it in the original. His friend Tattet ransacked the libraries, both public and private, in search of the sketch of a tragedy upon this theme, which some of the biographers of Racine had declared to exist among his papers. In his review of the "Alcestis" of Glück, J. J. Rousseau had made some very judicious criticism of the faults in the libretto of the Bailli du Rollet. These faults were a lack of variety in the situations, and a consequent monotony of language, so difficult to avoid that the Greek poet himself had fallen into it. Alfred was not discouraged, but accepted these

him what had become of his feeling for the sister in the midst of these love affairs. This is evidently her meaning in her remark about the "sacred story." We must not misinterpret the apparent levity with which the godson replies to this question. I think he was unwilling to have so serious a subject mixed up with the *badinage* by which he was trying to divert the mind of a lady whom he suspected of a slightly malicious feeling, not toward himself, but toward one whom he deeply reverenced. It was in a very different tone that he spoke of Sister Marcelline to the Duchesse de Castries, as may be seen by a letter to his brother, dated June, 1840. When he told the godmother that the "sacred story" was somewhat in the condition of the Old Testament, it was probably his way of refusing to answer her at all. — P. M.

criticisms as useful warnings. We shall see presently why this project was abandoned.

Unwilling to recall his thoughts to painful themes, I was careful, during his convalescence, not to allude to the things which had disturbed him before he was ill. M. Felix Bonnaire, in his morning calls, never breathed a word about work or engagements. Whether it were heedlessness or presentiment I cannot say; but Alfred made the remark now and then, that every thing arranged itself in this world, and that his affairs would do the same. Sister Marcelline had predicted it, and so it would be; and, in point of fact, the poet's embarrassments were about to receive a most unlooked-for solution. M. Charpentier had just effected a revolution in the book-trade. His 18mo editions brought within the reach of people of moderate means books which even the rich had previously found too dear. In the two preceding years, M. Charpentier had brought out a large number of books, and M. Buloz now suggested to him the idea of publishing the works of Alfred de Musset in the new form. To further the success of the scheme, M. Buloz consented to sacrifice a certain number of copies of his own 8vo edition of the "Spectacle dans un Fauteuil," which still remained in the book-shop of the "Revue." One morning, therefore, M. Charpentier came and proposed to the author of the "Contes d'Espagne" to collect all his poems in one volume of the new form. This proposal quite altered the aspect of affairs. M. Charpentier was not deceived in his expectations: a large number of copies of the reprinted poems were sold, and the other works by the same author came in their

turn to furnish occupation for the printers. It was a financial revolution for our poet, and he repeated many times, — "Sister Marcelline predicted this; and yet the poor girl hardly knows what a verse is."

For the complete enjoyment of his leisure and freedom of mind, our convalescent resolved to regale himself with some interminable reading. He read the whole of "Clarissa Harlowe" for the second time, and then he wanted the "Mémorial de Sainte Hélène," into which he plunged, and read and reread, until the pages were fairly disfigured. Afterwards he wished to make himself acquainted with all the memoirs which had been published concerning the empire; not forgetting the journal of Antomarchi. According to his wont, he exhausted the subject. When he was possessed by this sort of rage for a person, his reading, his thinking, and his conversation constituted a genuine monograph. I asked him what it was which had attracted him so powerfully toward the imperial epoch, and he replied, — "Its greatness. The pleasure of living in imagination in a heroic time, and the need of getting away from our own. I am tired of little things, and I turn toward the quarter where great ones are to be had. I care more to know how that man put on his boots, than for all the secrets of the present political situation in Europe. I know quite well that clever people nowadays dread nothing so much as being ridiculed for *chauvinisme;*[1] but, for my own part, I snap my fingers at that sort of ridicule."

[1] Military braggadocia, a loud and boastful type of patriotism. The name is derived from Chauvin, the veteran sergeant in Scribe's "Soldat Laboureur," and is especially applied to the worship of glory and the great emperor under the Napoleonic *régime.*

The month of June arrived, and the Parisians began to disperse. Tattet invited his friend to try the air of Bury. As in former years, they rode horseback night and day in the woods of Montmorency. On the spot where, in 1838, Alfred had composed the happy sonnet, beginning, "Quel plaisir d'être au monde," he realized the change which a short time had wrought in his opinions and tastes. The turbulent life which they led at Bury inspired him only with the desire to turn his horse into some solitary path. His friends have told me that one morning when he was late about rising, they went into his room, and found upon his table a sonnet to which, when he afterwards published it, he gave the name of "Tristesse." After having allowed the state of his mind to be suspected by the active companions whose zeal for pleasure he no longer shared, he was afraid of being a check upon them, and he came away.

At about this time there was a transient revival of interest in politics. War was thought to be imminent. France, finding herself once more alone and confronted by her old enemies, made as though she would resist a new coalition consolidated by England. So long as the government preserved its bellicose attitude, they continued to tack on the other side of the channel; but on the day when the king of France, who was considered able, made the blunder of announcing in his *ultimatum* that he would not go to the length of actual hostilities, his enemies, as might have been anticipated, redoubled their arrogance. There is no need to rehearse the pitiful part played by France in 1840. Her influence in the east was destroyed for a long time to come. Like all

honorable men, Alfred de Musset grievously resented his country's humiliation; and the day when the shameful conclusion was made known, he angrily exclaimed, "This reign has lasted too long."

When the policy of *peace at any price* had been fairly resumed, Alfred endeavored to forget it all. He haunted the galleries of the Théâtre Français, whatever the play might be, and notwithstanding the heat of summer. One evening when the audience was very small, — they were only playing Molière, — he came home and wrote that curious piece which he called "Une Soirée Perdue," and which is at once a satire and an elegy. The "Revue des Deux Mondes" profited by this graceful flight of fancy.

Shortly after, Mme. Berryer invited my brother and me to come and meet the godmother and several other agreeable people whom she had collected at her house. Accordingly, we went to Augerville together about the middle of September. The first part of our journey passed off gaily; but while we were crossing from Fontainebleau to Malesherbes, my brother became dreamy, and his melancholy mood infected me. Without confessing as much to one another, we both found ourselves carried back to the same time. These mysterious shades, these lofty forests so like Gothic cathedrals, the dark walls outlined against a blazing sky, — all these things were unchanged in appearance since 1833. What signified seven years more or less to trees three hundred years old? At every step Alfred felt the memories of his youth starting into more vivid life. The few words which he said I found again five months later in the lines now so well known, —

"Que sont-ils devenus les chagrins de ma vie ?
Tout ce qui m'a fait vieux est bien loin maintenant,
Et rien qu'en regardant cette vallée amie
Je redeviens enfant." [1]

While his thoughts lingered about the favorite ride and all the charming spots, mine went farther, and I recalled the day of his departure for Italy, the horrible winter of 1834, our desolated home, the six weeks of suspense when we heard nothing from our absent one, the return still sadder than the departure, — until the beauty of the forest made me shiver. Crushing the fine sand and jolting over the pavements, our uncomfortable vehicle brought us at last to the hospitable asylum where a delightful circle was awaiting us ; and in the evening, after dinner, we introduced into a charade the frightful drama of "Pouch Lafarge," who was so ill fed by his better half ; for the public was just then divided into the accusers and the partisans of Marie Capelle.

Thanks to the pending lawsuit, there was a great deal of discussion at Augerville about the art of poisoning and the ways of proving death by poison ; out of which arose the project of turning the story of Simone into verse. The last stanzas will be found to contain slight allusions to the contest in the Court of Assizes ; while the introduction betrays a good deal of anxiety about the evil course that literature was taking. Two months later, the author had pointed out the deplorable vagaries of the drama. Recurring now to pages written so long

[1] Where are now the sorrows of my life? That which has made me old is now far away. And the mere sight of this beloved valley makes me a child once more.

ago, we are struck with the prophetic character of all that portion which consists of literary criticism and observations on mental condition. But alas! in vain have poets received the gift of second sight. The fate of their predictions is not precisely like that of Cassandra's. We listen and admire. We are amazed that they should be able to tell us so exactly what is thought by people of taste. And then the torrent rolls on.

At Augerville, Alfred was apparently as happy as a child in vacation; nevertheless, at the end of a fortnight, he brought forward a pretext of pressing business, and took his leave. Although Rachel needed no champion, I hoped that he was returning to Paris for her sake; but it was written that these two creatures whose perfect accord was so much to be desired should never remain good friends for more than two weeks at a time. Almost as soon as Alfred saw Rachel again, they fell out with one another.

These trifles derive serious importance from the fact that, in consequence of the quarrel, all thoughts were abandoned, both of the "Alcestis" and the "Servante du Roi," and the one completed act of the latter piece was thrust away in a box. Many people will think that the author did not very well understand his true interests; and probably there are those among living dramatic writers who would have prosecuted their task with entire indifference to the ungrateful comments of Rachel. "Let her say what she will of me," they would have said, "provided she accepts a part which I have arranged. If the piece brings a good sum of money, the rest matters little." But Alfred de Musset was not exactly

like all the rest of the world; and since the sensibility of poets, unreasonable as it seems, is the source of their genius, we must forgive them for it.

His method of banishing Rachel, Frédégonde, and the annoyances of the side-scenes, was to plunge into the ideal world, and work to please somebody else; in this instance his godmamma, who was greatly interested in the subject of "Simone." This little poem, which Alfred wrote with enjoyment and even enthusiasm, appeared in the "Revue" for Dec. 1, 1840.

On the eleventh of the same month, the author completed his thirtieth year. That morning his air and bearing struck me as graver than usual. He made inquiries about the precise hour of his birth. I knew how he was feeling, and we talked long together. "I have come," he said, "to one of my climacterics. It is ten years and something more since I said my first word to the public. You know what I have thought and suffered. You know what luggage I carry, and can estimate its value. You can appreciate better than I can myself the reputation which I have won. Now, answer me truly, — Do you think that justice has been done me?"

Unhesitatingly, I replied "No."

"I have thought so myself," he replied, "but feared that I was mistaken. The public is behindhand with me. It is silent about the things I publish to a degree which amazes me. I have not the slightest wish to play the part of an unappreciated genius; but after ten years of work I think that I have the right to withdraw inside my tent. I am quite willing to say to myself that I have been a child until now; but I do not want others to say

it of me. It is high time that I had my dues. If I do not get them, I will be silent."

Alfred sat up very late on the night of the 11th of December; which was not in itself remarkable, since he rarely went to bed before two in the morning. It was during that night apparently that he wrote out the following reflections, on a stray bit of paper which lay about his table for a long time afterwards: —

"Thirty years old!

"There is a mournful look to be turned upon the past, only to see there dead hopes and dead sorrows; and a still more mournful one to be turned upon the future, there to see — the winter of life!

"There is a foolish thing to be attempted; and that is to keep on being a child, and yet it was a fine thing with those who were beloved of the gods, with Mozart, Raphael, Byron, and Weber, who died at thirty-six!

"There is a chilling thing to be done, and that is to say to one's self, 'All is over;' yet, when Göthe said it, it was noble.

"There is a stupid thing to be done, — to fancy that one has risen superior to one's self; to assume the style of an accomplished man; to live like an experienced egotist.

"A languid, lazy thing to be done, — not to hear the clock when it strikes!

"A brave thing to be done, — to hear it, and yet to live on in spite of the gods. But in that case one could not believe in eternity!

"A sublime thing to be done; and that is not even to know that the clock is striking. But in that case one would have to believe in every thing!

"However it be, it is certain that, at this age, the hearts of some crumble to dust, while those of others live on. Lay your hand upon your heart, for the moment is come. It falters. Has it ceased to beat? Become ambitious or avari-

cious, one or the other ; or else die at once ! Is it beating still ? Then let the gods do their worst ! Nothing is lost."

Thé poet had indeed laid his hand upon his heart, and listened attentively. But that heart was beating still, and nothing was lost.

XIV.

LORD BYRON said good-bye to youth at the age of thirty-six. Alfred de Musset, always eager to devour the time, had anticipated by a few years that crisis after which we see the future in a new light. Ever since the month of September, he had been dreaming over his excursion to the woods of Fontainebleau. The impressions which he received on that journey were both sweet and bitter; but, by and by, the bitter element, which had never been powerful, disappeared altogether. His recollections would have faded away entirely but for an unforeseen circumstance, which emphasized them anew and turned them to the profit of poesy. In the corridors of the Théâtre Italien, Alfred met a lady whom he had wellnigh forgotten for many years; but who had first crossed his path under the shades of that forest. He came home a good deal agitated. The Muse came with him, and invited him to labor. He resolved to entertain her as in happier days, by a grand illumination and a banquet. It was like the meeting of two reconciled friends; and the Muse, touched by her welcome, gave herself up without reserve. Whole stanzas flowed out upon the paper at one pulse of the fountain. The poet did not lie down before daybreak, nor did his inspiration slacken even in sleep; but the moment he awoke he seized the pen. The "Souvenir" appeared in the "Revue," Feb. 15, 1841.

When he had received the congratulations of his mother, those of his friend Tattet, and the letter from his godmamma, which never failed under such circumstances, Alfred said to me, "This is all I shall get by my sacrifice to the public. I have thrown to the beasts my bleeding heart. I have wrestled with my thought, to the end that a madman or a blockhead might hum these lines like any common song, —

"'Mes yeux ont contemplé des objets plus funèbres
Que Juliette morte, au fond de son tombeau.'[1]

"I said these words aloud, alone in the silence of the night, and there they are flung away to be picked up by any idle passer-by. Why could they not have waited till I was dead? But you will see that nobody will say a word about them then."

In short, he was beginning to perceive that his most remarkable poems seemed, at the time of their appearance, to fall into a void. Ever since his genius had taken a bolder flight; ever since his verses had acquired a world-wide range, so that any one with a heart might have felt their beauty, — the press had feigned unconsciousness of them: and, if haply the name of their author were mentioned, it was merely to quote, with disheartening levity, the poet of the Spanish tales, as though he had made no progress whatever since 1830.

For a long while, Alfred de Musset refused to believe in that conspiracy of silence, which every one else observed. He was too kindly readily to admit such a

[1] "My eyes have seen sights more funereal than that of Juliet dead in the tomb"

thought, too magnanimous to see meanness in others, too dignified to take a single one of those steps which are supposed to be indispensable to the success of any literary work. When, finally, the truth fairly stared him in the face, he failed to recognize it. Now and then, he felt the ill-will of those who award reputation. The injustice grieved him; but he was too proud to let his disappointment be known. His modesty always took the turn of self-disparagement. And, while he pronounced the funeral oration of poetry and the arts, he judged himself with incredible severity. In these moments of discouragement, he insisted that others should agree with him, and corroborate his own extreme views. After that, a word would suffice to produce a reaction in his mind; but, when you had restored him to a sense of his power, you had also restored his spirit of indifference. How many times when urged to work, his answer has been, "Why should I? Who cares? Who will thank me?"

We have seen that, in 1840, he had resolved for the future to write verse only. After the publication of the "Souvenir," he determined to write merely for his own pleasure. Thenceforward his table was strewn with sonnets, songs, and stanzas. He amused himself by writing in a hurry — sometimes in short-hand — on scraps of paper, the envelopes of letters, the margin of a lithograph, or the cover of a novel, as though to prove that what he wrote interested himself alone, and was never to see the light. I waited until some stimulant should rouse him; but, unfortunately, he received none but disagreeable impressions; for there are periods in life when one trouble invokes another as its complement,

and our woes are mutually aggravated by a kind of logical connection.

I have told how the friendly relations between Rachel and her champion were interrupted. Just then, Pauline Garcia was absent. To the shame of the Parisians be it said, the mass of the public had not obeyed the impulse given by people of taste on the first appearance of the youthful singer. The sister of Malibran sang in her own style, and according to her own feelings. At that time, there were certain infallible methods of getting one's self applauded at the Théâtre Italien, certain noises, hiccoughs, and invariable pauses, which never failed of success. It was a routine equally convenient for the artists and the *habituées* of the theatre; since it rendered quite unnecessary any knowledge of music on the part of the audience. Pauline Garcia repudiated these vulgar recipes. She adopted a course just the reverse of the fashionable one, and disdained the old effects which were looked for at certain places in her parts. On the other hand, she had flashes of genius which passed quite unnoticed. In a word, she was original. She needed to be understood, and she was not understood. After having sung Desdemona, Rosina, Tancrède, and Cinderella, with decreasing success, she thought that she had tried long enough; and she departed to a foreign land, to the great regret of the poet, who had celebrated her *début*, and saluted that "new era" which two years had sufficed to extinguish.

A lady to whom Alfred de Musset had become much attached during his illness had also gone away for a long absence. The Princess Belgiojoso, whose *salon*

was one of the pleasantest in Paris, was passing the winter in Italy. She was making a noble use of her large fortune, by founding an important charitable establishment some leagues from Milan. Like Sister Marcelline, she had talked very seriously with the poet. Alfred wrote to his fair monitress, and told her how keenly he regretted the affectionate sermons to which her voice had lent so much sweetness, adding that he would gladly have a slight illness for the sake of hearing more of the same. The princess replied by inviting him to come to Italy, where he would find a genial climate, a healthful regimen, and other sources of inspiration than were furnished by the Boulevard de Gand. She promised him entire freedom, a spacious lodging, a family library filled with rare books, and as many sermons as he might desire. This graceful invitation filled him with joy and gratitude. Again and again, during the winter of 1841, he repeated, — "I am not forgotten by everybody. When it becomes intolerably tedious here, I shall know where to look for hospitality."

But while he talked in Paris about going to Italy, he wrote to Milan that the project was a dream.

In the month of May, it was the godmother's turn. Usually her absences were brief; but this year she went into the country, intending to remain nearly all summer. She took care not to confide her purpose to her godson; but he, while expecting her return from day to day, went back to his sad refrain that his friends were falling off, and the desert widening around him.

He got up one morning, carrying in his looks that motto of Valentine of Milan which he was so fond of

quoting. It actually seemed as if nothing ever would rouse him out of his dejection, when his eye happened to light on the song of the poet Becker. It proved the spur which woke him suddenly. The Vicomte Delaunay, in one of his witty papers, has pleased himself by describing, in a very sprightly fashion, the origin of the "Rhin Allemand." All this anecdote lacks is veracity. It is made up from beginning to end. The truth is as follows: —

On the first of June, 1841, we were breakfasting at home, when a copy of the "Revue des Deux Mondes" was brought in, which contained both Becker's song and the "Marseillaise de la Paix." Alfred, seeing some verses by Lamartine in the table of contents, turned at once to that page of the magazine. When he read those six couplets of Becker's which contain in so few words so many insults to France, he knitted his brows; but, when he had read the reply to them, he knitted them still more. No doubt he would have approved the feeling which inspired the "Marseillaise de la Paix," if the piece had appeared by itself. It is perfectly legitimate to invite all men to clasp hands without distinction of race, name, or geographical boundary. As a philosophical proposition, it is as good as any other; but to reply to an insolent challenge by opening one's arms to the challenger is to choose one's time ill. This was the way Alfred de Musset looked at it; and since, to his mind, the "Marseillaise de la Paix" was no answer to Becker's song, the desire seized him to answer it himself. The more we discussed it at the breakfast-table, the more animated his face grew. He flushed to his very ears. Finally, he

struck the table with his fist, retired into his own room and shut the door. At the end of two hours, he emerged and repeated to us the "Rhin Allemand." For all M. de Lamartine called it a "tavern-song," it made an immense stir. The Duc d'Orléans at once despatched his congratulations to the author; for, since the retrograde movement of the preceding year, the political situation had not been such as to allow the heir-apparent to express himself openly. It is no exaggeration to say that at least fifty composers wrote music for this song. One of these airs was adopted by the army, and sung in all the barracks. Prussian officers wrote the author taunting letters, some in German and others in French, making appointments at Baden, and inviting him to fight them there on such or such a day. As often as one of these letters arrived, he laid it carefully away in a drawer. "These are fine young men," he said: "I like their patriotism. It gratifies me to perceive that my verses have gone to the right spot. I have clinched Becker's nail. But why does he not write me himself? He is the man I would like to fight. As for my young Prussians, they may fight with the French officers who have challenged Becker, if there are any."

The "Rhin Allemand" was composed on the morning of the first of June. Out of respect for the author of the "Marseillaise de la Paix," Alfred refused to publish it in the "Revue." Moreover, the next number would not come for a fortnight. He therefore offered the piece to the "Revue de Paris," which was published weekly; and there it appeared on Sunday, June 6th, while the Vicomte Delaunay's comments on it were printed in the "Presse."

From Tourraine, where she was spending the summer, came the godmother's congratulations to her child. "The 'Rhin Allemand,' she wrote, "is better than the best songs of Béranger. There is a breath of loftier poetry in it." To compliments she added exhortations to industry. The godson replied that his patriotic fibres would not be stirred every morning, and that his heart was fast asleep and would not wake easily. The godmother again reproached him for his indolence, and again he made a jesting defence. "It is all your fault," he answered, "if I am tired to death and don't know what to do with my evenings. But *ennui* and indifference are the best possible remedies for the disease called *poesy*. Consequently, I am very well; and what are you scolding about?"

In fact, the summer of 1841 seemed to him interminable. The manager of the "Revue" had quite as good a right as the godmother to exclaim against his indolence, and I emphasized all he said. Alfred was sincerely fond of M. Buloz, and very sorry that he could not satisfy him. Finally, after a silence of six months, after being repeatedly and earnestly pressed to explain his conduct, he wrote the verses, "Sur la Paresse," which he addressed in the form of a letter to the man most interested in the question. Usually, a satire loses its point in a little while: but these verses read as if they had been written yesterday; a fact which proves that the author understood perfectly the eccentricities of his age, and that the age has not yet overcome them. Read over the passages about hypocrisy, the unbridled love of money, pompous egotism, the importance of

bread and butter, and that mediocrity which understands nothing but itself. It is all seasonable at the end of thirty years. The epistle was published on the first of January, 1842. "There," said the author, "that is the cleverest thing I ever wrote."

I asked him where the cleverness lay. "Don't you see," he replied, "I have given reasons for my silence; and these reasons, whether good or bad, imply a promise that that silence shall continue. Really, it remains to be seen whether I keep my word. But when the world perceives that my disdain is real and unaffected, as it certainly is, I shall no longer give umbrage to any one. Those who pretend to be unaware of my existence will consent to acknowledge it. Am I a clerk or a copyist, that people should pester me about the employment of my time? I have written a great deal. I have made as many verses as Dante or Tasso. Who the deuce ever presumed to call them lazy? If Göthe took it into his head to fold his hands, who ever reproved him for frittering away his time over science? I will follow Göthe's example to the day of my death, if it suits me! My Muse is my own; and I will show the public that she obeys me, and I am her master, and that, if it wants any thing of her, it must do as I like."

When Tattet, in his turn, requested his friend to explain the course he was taking, he received in reply the following verses, —

> "Le mal des gens d'esprit, c'est leur indifférence,
> Celui des gens de cœur, leur inutilité." [1]

[1] "The trouble with people of mind is their indifference; with people of heart, their impracticability."

The next number of the "Revue des Deux Mondes," after that in which the letter on Indolence appeared, was to contain an article by M. Sainte Beuve. In reading the proofs of this article, M. Buloz came upon a paragraph, the terms of which he thought calculated to put the modesty of Alfred de Musset to too severe a test. On the eve of the publication of the number, he sent me a hasty note, begging me to come and see him. I complied, and he read me the paragraph. It was a classification of living poets; not in the order of their merit, but in what the critic conceived to be the order of their celebrity. It was a perfectly useless thing, proving nothing whatever: and the least of the objections to it was the one that the author himself allowed; namely, that it was sure to wound the persons mentioned, quite as much as those whose names were omitted. In this classification, Alfred de Musset was assigned to the third rank, and to a class so numerous that there were even *ladies* in it. The critic added, however, that if the young poet were often to write satires like the verses "Sur la Paresse," or meditations like the "Nuit de Mai," he would stand a good chance of promotion to another group.

M. Buloz asked me what I thought of this judgment: and I replied that, if the writer of it had stopped his readings at the "Nuit de Mai," it would be a good plan to send him the twenty copies of the "Revue" which contained the other Nights, and the various poems and "meditations" published during the last six years; moreover, that I should hardly have expected to find the author of the letter on Indolence confounded with

versifiers to whom the manager of the "Revue" had frequently returned their productions, with as little consideration for "ladies" as for gentlemen; that I thought the judgment in question thoroughly unfair, even in respect of applying the word "meditations" to poems of unquestionable originality; that it did not become the "Revue" to speak in such terms of one of its most popular editors; but that, if they desired to transfix their readers by the insertion of a page which would give more pain to Alfred de Musset's admirers than even to himself, the article was perfectly adapted to its end, and ought not to be altered in the least. M. Buloz hastened to assure me that he had no such intention, and he promised that he would request M. Sainte Beuve either to modify or entirely suppress that passage in his article.

Nevertheless, I knew the irritable temper and impracticable vanity of M. Sainte Beuve so well, that, when the number came on the fifteenth of January, I had a presentiment that nothing would be changed. Alfred took the pamphlet, opened it at random, and lighted directly upon the page where his name occurred. After an instant, he laid the number on the mantel, saying, in a low tone, "Et tu, Sainte Beuve!"

He at once changed the subject, and refused to recur to it. As for me, I protested as I had a right to do, and took the consequences of my recriminations. I have been taking them ever since, for they have not yet come to an end. At present, a glance at the poems of Alfred de Musset will show that he has not added to his works, since 1842, many satires, or "meditations" either; yet

M. Sainte Beuve has revoked his judgment. He has placed the author of the "Nuit de Mai" among the gods, since his death be it understood, — which is why I make this reparation to-day. And if my apology seem somewhat tardy, so was his.

Alfred did not go very much into society in 1842; but he went back to two or three *salons* which were frequented by friends of his. From these, he several times returned with sonnets or *rondeaux* in his head, which he addressed on the morrow to some lady or other; but of which, unfortunately, he did not always keep copies. As for the charming allegory of the "Merle Blanc," it was composed for an illustrated publication, the author of which had won his esteem, and he did not consider it work at all.

The illness through which he had been so carefully nursed by Sister Marcelline had left him with an unfortunate tendency toward diseases of the chest. He needed to take the utmost precaution; and he would take none. To the numerous colds which he owed to the organization of the national guard, were added others caught through mere imprudence. Often, to his great annoyance, he was condemned to keep his room; but his constitution was so elastic that a few hours restored him. I would leave him prostrate in bed, and, coming back almost immediately to keep him company, I would find him up, and pulling on his walking boots. Twice during the winter we called in the physicians; but they bled him too profusely.

Whatever they may say to the contrary, I am convinced that their lancets did him incurable harm.

One morning in March, when we were at breakfast, I perceived that my brother, at every pulse-beat, gave a slight involuntary toss of the head. He demanded to know why my mother and I looked at him curiously; and we told him what we had observed. "I did not know," he replied, "that that was visible; but I can set your minds at rest."

He pressed the nape of his neck in some way with his thumb and forefinger, and his head immediately ceased to mark the pulsations of his heart. "You perceive," he said, "that this terrible disorder can be cured by a very cheap and simple method."

In our ignorance, we were reassured; but in reality we had seen the first symptom of a most serious affection, to which, at the end of fifteen years, he was destined to succumb.

On the return of warm weather, Alfred expressed a wish to take a little rest in the country; and the doctors advised it. Our good friend and cousin, the inspector of forests, had quitted the woods of Joinville for those of Ivry; and, in the hope that this change of residence would be his last, he had purchased, near Pacy-sur-Eure, the little Château of Lorey, which had once belonged to the renowned Taglioni. Life was lively in the valley of the Eure. People danced and played comedies, not at Lorey alone, but also at Breuil-Pont, at Comte Louis Talleyrand's, and with the ladies Roederer at Mesnil; and Alfred repaired thither in response to our cousin's numerous invitations. On the 14th of July, at a large and gay party which he attended, he observed that the legitimists present were conversing in undertones.

Some startling piece of news had been received, which people did not venture to do more than whisper one to another. The master of the house changed countenance when he heard the tidings, and uttered an exclamation of grief and consternation: the Duc d'Orléans was dead. Alfred returned to Paris the same day; not to mingle the vain expression of his condolence with others more or less sincere, but to be present at the funeral ceremonies, and then to shut himself up and give way to his own personal sorrow and regret. The death of the prince who had honored him with the title of friend took away all his courage. A great many of his illusions had been dispelled within a brief period; but now his last hope deserted him. "Fate," he said, "has decreed that our poor France should have no future, — not a single day. As for mine, it is annihilated. I see nothing before me but weariness and disgust. I only want to go myself as soon as may be."

I reminded him of his passion for the unforeseen, and the interest which he often took in watching his own career. "Nobody ever knows," I said, "what destiny has in store for him. Nature and chance are inexhaustible." To which he replied, that it had been all very well to say so formerly; but that now the unknown had nothing to offer him,—not even in the way of new griefs and trials, which would be welcome if he could regard them as salutary "derivatives," alluding to the doctrine of Hippocrates that one inflammation destroys another.

When it was suggested to him that his attachment to the prince royal might seem to demand some public expression of his grief, he repudiated the idea of mak-

ing verses on such a theme. M. Asseline, the secretary of the Duchesse d'Orléans, brought him the engraving of the prince after Ingres. Alfred begged him to express his gratitude; and added that, when the official mourners had dried their tears, he should have something to say.

It was at this time that Tattet formed the resolution of leaving Paris, and taking up his abode at Fontainebleau. The motives which impelled him thus to break with his past life were too serious to admit of discussion. Alfred found fresh matter of grief in this separation, and felt it more keenly than he had anticipated. It was no "derivative" (to use his own expression), but an aggravation. Tattet was not merely a charming companion and a faithful friend: he had also precious qualities as a confidant and a listener. His admiration for the character and genius of his favorite poet manifested themselves with a fervor of which every one who approached him felt the fascination; and how much more he who was the object of it! The pleasures, the pains, and the vexations of his friend, Tattet laid to heart as if they had been his own. At his house used to assemble a small circle of agreeable men, whom his departure scattered. There were promises of frequent meetings at Fontainebleau; but daily confidences, long talks, readings in common, and the perpetual interchange of ideas and impressions, were no longer to be expected. It was a real loss, added to the visionary one of so many illusions and hopes.

Strange as it may seem, this man, so depressed, so discouraged and disenchanted, — who reiterated with perfect sincerity, "Nothing remains for me;"

this drowsy heart "shut up," as he declared, "for ever,"[1] — was becoming daily more susceptible to the slightest emotion, and consequently more poetic than before. Misfortune, anguish, and regret seemed only to enhance his susceptibility. A word, a line of poetry, a strain of melody, would bring the tears to his eyes. At the very moment when he was lamenting that he had not the strength to live any longer, his impressions were becoming more vivid than ever, and external objects were acting upon his organization with greater power.

One day, in his edition of the four great Italian poets, he came upon some sonnets by Michael Angelo Buonarotti. The depth of thought, the vigorous terseness of their form, delighted him. He amused himself by trying to detect in the poet's manner the peculiar qualities of the sculptor and the painter; and, when he found a verse in which the thought seemed to him to be compressed into an unusually small number of words, he would exclaim, "There's brevity!"

He now conceived the desire of delineating, like Michael Angelo, some grand statuesque figure. He was at that time on intimate terms with a beautiful and very distinguished lady, for whom he had a strong friendship; but who sometimes treated him with a curtness and severity under which he was not always patient, so that their relation was marred by clouds and misunderstandings.[2] I never knew what the last offence was; but I know he must have encountered some very harsh, unjust, and injurious treatment on the day when he came

[1] See the sonnet to Alfred Tattet, on his departure from Paris.

[2] See correspondence of Alfred de Musset for the year 1842.

home resolved to break with this lady for ever. In the mood of mind which I have described, he wrote the verses "Sur une Morte." The rupture was complete and irremediable. In order to judge whether the writer of those verses was to blame, one should understand the wound which he resented; and no one knows how deep that was. No one ever blamed the great Corneille for yielding to an impulse of poetic wrath against a lady who was rash enough to ridicule him. The way not to feel the lion's claw is not to tease him.

Beside the sonnets of Michael Angelo, Alfred read and re-read, until he knew them by heart, the poems of Giacomo Leopardi, where the vibration between stern sorrow and tender melancholy corresponded with his present state of mind. When he struck the cover of the book, and said, "This little volume is worth a whole epic," he felt that Leopardi's soul was the sister of his own. The Italians have such keen intellects that they are not very fond of the poetry of the heart. They want long, high-sounding words. Less fortunate than Alfred de Musset, Leopardi did not receive justice from his countrymen even after his death. Alfred was outraged by the thought. He desired to write an article for the "Revue des Deux Mondes" on this man whom he regarded as the first of modern Italian poets; and he even collected some biographical materials for this purpose. But, while he dreamed of this, he preferred to pay in verse his tribute of sympathy and admiration to the "Sad friend of Death." Hence the piece entitled "Après une Lecture," which appeared on the fifteenth of November, 1842.

While allowing for his excessive sensibility and natural exaggeration, we must concede, that, during the fatal year of 1842, Alfred de Musset received terrible wounds. He complained that, from every quarter at once, came matter of sorrow, disenchantment, and disgust. "I can see nothing," he said, "but the reverse of every medal."

Every symptom of deterioration in letters, he sorrowfully resented. The magazine-story had just then touched its extreme of popularity, cynicism, and audacity; and every one who wielded a pen had a right to feel humiliated. Alfred blushed for the fact, as did all writers of refinement. On the one hand, he beheld the literature of the imagination soiled and polluted, and a general falling off in literary honesty, public taste, and an appreciation of what is really fine; on the other, men of genius losing courage. At thirty-two, he lamented that he had lived too long. Add, moreover, his broken idols, the image of Rachel defaced, Pauline Garcia far away and forgotten, Tattet's voluntary exile, Sainte Beuve relegating the author of the verses "Sur la Paresse" to the level of female versifiers, Lamartine making him wait six years for an answer, the Duc d'Orléans miserably slain by a vulgar carriage accident,— and it must be conceded that even a man of duller susceptibilities than Alfred might here have found cause of sadness and lament. It is certain that, at this epoch, all things seemed to combine to affect him, and every thing that in any way affected his mind or heart gave him occasion for distress. Finally, even I, who would gladly have consoled him by any means in my power,— even I contrib-

uted my pang, like all the rest. For some years I had been dreaming of a trip to Italy, and just at the close of this year, 1842, the journey so long desired became practicable, and I left home on the nineteenth of November. Unwilling to mar my pleasure, Alfred said not a word of the enormous void which my absence would make in his life, at a time when he needed me so much. He insisted on accompanying me to the coach-office, although he was not well on that day, and he bade me good-bye with a smile. A letter from the godmother revealed what he had felt when he shook my hand at the door of the vehicle. "I was still too happy," he said; "for at any hour of the night or day I could tell my troubles to a friend. Even this comfort had to be taken away from me."

I had but come to the first halting-place on my route, when I received this letter. I was stopping at Mirecourt, in the Vosges, where our good uncle Desherbiers was sub-prefect. The godmother's information made me very anxious. I wrote to my brother, and told him that, if he really needed me, I would defer my Italian journey to some other time, and go back and spend the winter in Paris. Alfred replied by the letter which follows, and which I copy in this place to give some idea of his unselfishness and delicacy of feeling, and of the affection which united us: —

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart, my dear friend, for your good letter. I will begin by answering your question, conscientiously, as you desire. Pray do not think of me otherwise than as a brother and a friend, and forget entirely my passing annoyances, which are of no account. I am very

well just now; and having no cause of vexation, whether real or material, my melancholy is gone with my fever. Of course, our midnight talks were very precious, and you may be sure I shall never forget the friendship you showed me in that last time of trial. You have been both extremely kind and extremely helpful to me; but I beseech you to set forth on your journey without a single regret, or any afterthought capable of troubling you for an instant.

"My mother is come back, and so is Mme. Jaubert. You see that I am not alone. Mme. de Lagrange has invited me again, in the sweetest possible manner.

"The good captain charged me to tell you that the matter of the correspondence was arranged. Letters for you will be forwarded hence to Mme. Aubernon, who will send them on to you. You will only need to give the address, or rather the addresses, of the places where you want them sent.

"I am not surprised that you are happy with our excellent uncle. Tell him that I love him, and should enjoy just as much with him as you do. Tell him that he remains in my memory as the man of all men for whom I have most sympathy and respect.

"Farewell. Do not fail to write. Your letters will do me a great deal of good. I embrace you,

"ALFRED.

"THURSDAY, Dec. 1, 1842."

PART FOURTH.

From 1843 to 1857.

XV.

ONE of our sister's earliest friends was a young girl who had been obliged to return to her father's house almost immediately after her marriage. All the best society of Paris was interested in the misfortunes of this truly amiable, discreet, and beautiful woman, condemned at the age of twenty to perpetual widowhood. Her residence under her husband's roof had been accompanied by circumstances so strange, that the question was raised whether she ought not still to be regarded as unmarried. Unable to regret a man who had spared no pains to alienate her from him, she was not long in drying her tears and resuming her wonted grace and gayety. We were then living in her neighborhood.[1] She came frequently to see her former playmate, and to relate to our mother the lamentable causes of her lawsuit. When she went home at nightfall, although she had not a hundred paces to go, a servant came for her. Two or three times only did Alfred give her his arm to escort her to her own door. But they were observed, and it was enough to give occasion, not for slander, but for significant smiles of envy and malice. Alfred would not wait till the smiles had been translated into speech. He wrote the sonnet, "Non, quand j'en mêmе une amère Souffrance," to which I refer the

1 Since the month of Oc 1839, we had lived on the Quai Voltaire.

reader. Reverence for innocence has never, I think, inspired purer or more perfect poetry.

At his godmother's, Alfred often met another young wife, who had been almost as unhappily married as the one I have just mentioned. Her husband had just died most opportunely ; and death, in the words of Sganarelle, adjusts many things. The year of mourning had passed, and the widow was taking off her weeds. One evening when he was sitting by her, Alfred told her that she was too young and too beautiful not to marry again ; but apparently marriage had left such bitter memories that she cried out at the suggestion, "Never!" speaking the word with an energy of horror which impressed the poet greatly. This is the whole history of the sonnet which is entitled "Jamais!" The other incidents of the conversation will be found in the lines themselves. The lady's reply was sincere, and her resolution perfectly well considered. She kept her word.

Under the pseudonyme of P. J. Stahl, Jules Hetzel, editor and author, had recently composed a fanciful tale, illustrated by a large number of engravings by Tony Johannot. To insure the success of this expensive work, Hetzel entreated my brother to contribute some verses, and allow his name to be associated with that of the prose author. At first, Alfred obstinately refused ; but, among the sketches of Johannot which pleased him very much, there was a graceful figure of a young girl sitting at a piano and singing. The piece of music which was to be interpolated in the text was a *lied* of Mozart's, not yet published in France, the refrain of which was "Vergiss mein nicht." Alfred set it up on

his sister's piano, and when she had sung it to him he liked it so well that he wanted to translate the words. Difficult as the attempt was to adapt words to music already written, he succeeded at one sitting. He felt as if he were bound to do so. Johannot's drawings also inspired him with a sonnet, and the editor asked no more. Marie, and the *lied* in three couplets, "Rapelle-toi," were inserted in the "Voyage où il vous plaira," and P. J. Stahl is responsible for the rest. What Alfred would not have done from interested motives, he furnished impulsively under the charm of Tony Johannot's talent, and especially of the genius of Mozart. He allowed his name to be inscribed on the frontispiece of the illustrated volume.

After spending the winter in Naples and the spring in Rome, I found myself in the month of July at Florence, and there one evening at Countess Orlow's, I heard them talking about some verses on the death of the Duc d'Orléans, which had appeared in the French papers. The daughter of Countess Orlow, Madame Orsini, quoted the two first verses of the tribute:—

> "La joie est ici-bas toujours jeune et nouvelle,
> Mais le chagrin n'est vrai qu'autant qu'il a vieilli."[1]

I knew that my brother had meant to wait for the anniversary of the thirteenth of July, before paying his meed of regret to the prince whom he had loved, and to the Princess Marie, whose coffin was still at Pisa. I knew the mournful pleasure which he had promised himself in recurring to that almost forgotten misfortune, at

[1] "Joy is ever new and fresh in this world; but grief is genuine only in proportion to its age."

the risk of astonishing those who had wept so loudly at the time, but who very probably might take no heed of the first recurrence of the fatal anniversary. When I saw the effect produced by this poem in a foreign land, I never doubted that its author would receive some token of remembrance and affection from the royal family. I was mistaken. The king did not even read the verses on the death of his son ; and it seems that the Duchesse d'Orléans noticed only the word concerning Laborderie, one of the school-mates of Alfred and the prince at the college of Henry IV., whom the poet speaks of as the *best of us three.* A long while after the publication of the stanzas on the anniversary of the "Treize Juillet," when it was no longer possible to ignore such a tribute to the memory of the Duc d'Orléans, a messenger from the palace brought the author a few words of very frigid and ceremonious politeness. From the constrained manner of the messenger, and the tone in which he inquired who Laborderie was, Alfred divined that the princess had been offended by the too laudatory mention of their old comrade. On the other hand, he received a letter in an unfamiliar hand, in which a lady thanked him, in glowing and affecting terms, for having made her brother's name immortal. The letter announced the coming of a tea-service in Limoges porcelain, some pieces of which are still in existence. As long as the poet lived, the sister of Laborderie wrote him once a year, and sent him a truffled fowl at carnival time.

Before I went to Italy, I had made, in company with J. Hetzel and M. Obeuf, the mayor of Bellevue, an excur-

sion to Pontchartrain, which abounded in comic incidents, and the story of which diverted my brother so much that he had amused himself by turning it into verse. Hetzel repeated some parts of it to Charles Nodier, who requested the whole, and we sent it to him. After the lapse of nearly a year, Nodier, in a fit of mirthfulness, addressed to the author of that burlesque Odyssey some verses in the same measure in which it was written. Alfred replied, also in the same metre. His mind was still full of this pleasantry when the board of discipline decided to punish with severity the neglect of national-guard duty, and sentenced him to several days' imprisonment. The culprit made interest, and obtained the room numbered either 11 or 14, whose walls the artists who had been as lawless as himself had covered with paintings and drawings. The prisoner enjoyed this dungeon immensely; and, by way of leaving there a *souvenir* of his own residence, he inscribed a few verses under a female figure which took his fancy; and, when he was released, still pursued by the rhythm of his rustic Odyssey, he composed the "Mie Prigioni," published by the "Revue," Oct. 1, 1843. The copy containing these lines fell into the hands of M. le Comte Molé, who, attracted no doubt by the originality of the title and the brevity of the piece, read it through, and was so much pleased with it that he charged a third person to be the bearer of his compliments to the author, and to tell him that if ever he, M. Molé, was in the ministry again, he would remember him. M. Molé was never minister again; but he did not forget "Mie Prigioni," when its author paid him a visit as candidate for the French Academy.

When I returned from Italy in November, 1843, Alfred wanted to celebrate the day, and he took me off to dine at the restaurant, although dinner was ready for us at home. We had to talk over that beloved Italy with which I was yet more in love than he. My fresh recollections awoke his own. We talked all dinner-time, and in the evening, over the fire, we talked on until two hours after midnight. The next day and for many days, we had to recur to the subject. Venice in particular was an inexhaustible theme. But when I spoke of Florence, and the Pitti museum, we always stopped at Allori's Judith; and I reminded my brother that the strange history of that fine work and its author had once seemed to him worthy of being related by the pen which had produced the "Fils du Titien."

It is well known that Cristofano Allori, when betrayed by his mistress, conceived the singular idea of representing her in the character of Judith, and of giving the bleeding head of Holofernes his own face. The evening that we recurred to the subject, my brother's interest in it so revived that he thought he would treat it in verse. When we separated, he continued to dream over it by himself. During the night, he arranged the plan of the work; and the next day a few verses were already put upon paper. Unhappily, he had a painter among his friends, an accomplished man whom he often consulted. The artist was so imprudent as to say that the figure of Judith might represent Allori's mistress; but that the face of Holofernes was not a likeness of the painter. He went so far as to say that there was no meaning in the man's head at all. Alfred was annoyed.

He felt personally injured by these doubts as to the authenticity of Allori's portrait, and the misunderstanding lasted three weeks, — one of his most protracted temper fits. Peace was signed one evening when we were discussing art; but the impressionable poet was disenchanted, and Judith and Allori were laid aside. A friend, quite innocently no doubt, was thus responsible for the failure of what promised to be a noble and interesting work. It is all the more to be regretted because the friend was wrong. The portrait of Cristofano Allori by himself in the Uffizi Gallery has precisely the same face as the head of Holofernes in the Pitti palace.[1] Here is all I have been able to find of the verses which my brother threw off when he composed the plan of the work.

CHOEUR DES PEINTRES.

Ni les sentiers battus, ni les règles antiques,
O puissant créateur, n'ont été faits pour toi.
Libre comme les vents, la loi que tu pratiques
Est de vivre sans loi.

ROMANO.

Allori, le grand-duc forme une académie;
Il t'en nomme le chef. Les arts, en Italie,
Meurent d'une honteuse et misérable mort.

ALLORI.

Mourir avant le temps est un bienfait du sort.
Allons, nobles seigneurs, entrons chez ma maîtresse.

LE CHOEUR.

Où sont, Cristofano, les jours de la jeunesse?
Alors, on te voyait, autour les lourds arceaux,

[1] I verified this a second time when I was last in Florence. The number of the portrait is 263. — P. M.

Sur les murs des palais promenant tes pinceaux
Verser assidûment la couleur et la vie.
Te voilà pâle et triste. Est-ce la jalousie
Qui t'a fait, comme un spectre, errer toute la nuit?
Quel usage as-tu fait de ce jour qui s'enfuit?
Prends garde au noir chagrin qui mène à la folie.
Il est un sûr remède à la mélancolie, —
Le travail, le travail! Cesse donc de rêver:
La peinture se meurt, et tu peux la sauver.

ALLORI.

Elle est morte d'ennui, de froid et de vieillesse.
Allons, nobles seigneurs, entrons chez ma maîtresse.[1]

There is also in existence the fragment of a scene in which Allori, having obtained certain proofs of the unfaithfulness of his mistress, confides to his pupil Romano his jealousy and despair. The author doubtless threw his useless way-marks into the fire, and only formless scraps of them have clung to my memory.

[1] *Chorus of painters.* Beaten paths and ancient rules were not made for thee, O great master! Thou art free as air, and the only law which thou obeyest is to live without law.

Romano. Allori, the Grand Duke is forming an Academy, and hath appointed thee its master. Art in Italy is dying a shameful and miserable death.

Allori. Early death is a boon of destiny. Come, noble sirs, let us go to my mistress.

Chorus. Where, O Cristofano, are the days of thy youth? Then we were wont to see thee among the low arches, wielding thy pencil over palace walls, and lavishly expending life and color. Now thou art pale and sad. Is it jealousy that makes thee wander like a spectre all night long? What hast thou done with the day which is flitting away so fast? Beware of the dark melancholy which tends to madness! There is a sure remedy for it. Work! work! Dream no more! Painting is at the point of death, and thou couldst save her!

Allori. She is dead already of cold and weariness and old age! Come, noble sirs, let us go to my mistress!

Our discussions of Italy were kept up all winter. This innocent pleasure was interrupted by an attack of pleurisy, which my brother caught in the most senseless manner possible, on a night-ramble in the Bois de Boulogne when the weather was fine, but the cold mortally severe. There was the same unnecessary blood-letting as before, and it protracted his convalescence. To while away the time, he wrote a novelette about the loves of two deaf-mutes which appeared in the "Constitutionnel." He also composed some lines "To my Brother on his Return from Italy," and after that he persisted in silence in spite of all manner of entreaties and offers of the most brilliant description. His friends themselves left off teasing, when they saw that it annoyed him. "I am curious to know," he said to me, "whether Petrarch had always a dozen pedagogues or policemen at his heels, forcing him at the point of the sword to write verses on Laura's blue eyes when he wanted to be quiet. This reproach of laziness is a new invention, in which one can smell the age of manufacture a league away. Why is not M. de Cambrai attacked for having written only one romance, *ad usum Delphini*. You deserve, every one of you, that I should set about writing a Latin poem, as long and as crude as Petrarch's 'Africa.' I'd like to know just how many of those who call me indolent are only repeating what they have heard somebody else say, and how many of them never read a verse in their lives, and would be at their wits' end if they were obliged to read any thing beside the 'Mysteries of Paris.' The newspaper-story is the true literature of our day."

The deterioration of public taste was one reason why he preferred to keep silence; but there were others at once deeper and more dignified, which his modesty forbade him fully to explain, even in *tête-à-têtes* with me or his friend Tattet. The lines "Sur la Paresse" contained but half his thought. Had he completed his poem of "Judith," this negligent and scornful mood might perhaps have been illustrated in the character of Allori. The poet, as was his wont, might have endowed the hero with his own sentiments. Had an occasion and a pretext been given, he might have formulated his principles, his grievances, and the reasons of his disgust, in the language of the "Nuit de Mai," and the heart which he was determined to keep shut would have opened in spite of himself. I therefore regret the poem of "Judith" on more than one account.

There was not an hour in which this indolent man was not busy. His days were divided between reading and games of chess. He undertook to study the treatises of Philidor, Walker, &c. He had sometimes the honor of being the antagonist of Labourdonnays, and the most famous members of the chess club. Nothing could be less like laziness than this ardent study, as it were, of an abstract science. But neither reading nor chess-playing could wholly exclude *ennui*. Often did Alfred complain of the length of life, and that time the rascal did not move a step. He had withdrawn from society, and avoided his most agreeable companions. The god-mother herself saw him only at long intervals.

When the notion took him to break up his usual habits and go in search of distraction, he went from one

extreme to the other. He would go ten nights in succession to the Théâtre Italien, the Opéra, or the Opéra Comique ; and then some evening he would come home, satiated with music for a long while. If he joined a pleasure party, it was in the same excited frame of mind. It was all extravagant, and often injurious to his health ; but, to his dying day, he never could be restrained by reasonable precautions, or any sort of moderate *régime*. Another literary man who had once seen him intoxicated came to me one morning in the street, and, without mentioning the encounter, began to speak of the poet's long silence in a tone of hypocritical regret, amid which I detected gleams of a satisfaction which he could not wholly conceal. Jealousy, in so infinitesimal a writer, was laughable. I reassured the poet's *confrère*, about the faculties of the man of whom he was so disinterestedly fond, and I had the satisfaction of seeing his brow darken in proportion as his anxieties were relieved. About the same time, — almost on that very day, — the godmother, whom nothing escaped, told me that she had received similar expressions of condolence. She was seriously alarmed by them. "It is evident," she said, "that if envy and slander can put on the appearance of interest and compassion, they will be very much more at their ease. I have already observed an increased readiness to talk about our poet. Praise is no longer grudged him ; but people make haste to add that there is nothing more to be expected from his Muse. If you believe me, do not let a day pass before you warn him of his danger."

I replied that I should have my labor for my pains,

that our poet despised prudence, and that I had no longer any influence with him; but that the godmother herself, who was quite new to the business, might have some effect. "Ah, well!" she said bravely, "I will try."

She afterwards gave me a hint of the tone she meant to take, and the arguments she would employ; and what she said was marked by a clearness and felicity of expression, that surpassed my expectations. I came away full of hope, admiring the superiority of women to ourselves in eloquence, and even in logic, when their feelings are moved. A note was dropped in the post-office containing a request that the godson would come and have a talk with his godmother, who promised to deny herself to all other visitors.

On Thursday, August 13, 1844, after dinner, Alfred accepted the invitation, and they had an interview which lasted until midnight. I was absent just then, having gone to the Vosges and Baden to meet some friends who took me with them to Switzerland, whence I went by way of Constance to Venice. Returning in the month of November, I asked the godmother about the result of her interview. "Do not speak of it," she replied with emotion. "Our dear Damis'[1] feelings were dreadfully hurt, and so were mine. I cannot repeat what he said. It would be too much for me. All is, I was beaten at every point. He is a hundred times right. His silence, his lassitude, his disdain, are only too fully justified. If he would but speak out, he would overwhelm those who have presumed to censure and pity

[1] This was one of her pet-names for her godson. — P. M.

him, and sooner or later his immense superiority will be acknowledged by all the world. Let us leave time to do its work, and not play with fire; for we are mere children in comparison with him. After he left me, the poor boy wrote a sonnet which he sent me early the next morning, and it wrung tears from my eyes. He wanted to show me what he was capable of doing, — as if I had any doubts about that! I keep these lines among my papers, and some day perhaps they will be published, and then that dreadful thirteenth of August will not have been in vain."

I asked to see the sonnet; but the godmother dreaded the reading of it. She would not fetch it, but spoke of something else. Thirteen years later, after my brother's death, she gave me the original. Here it is, —

"A blockhead's calumnies offend me not,[1]
Nor loud reproach of libertine and sot
From any base officious hypocrite
Whose hand I clasped in faith but yesternight.
The very glass is worthier in my sight
Which brings brief ease amid my cruel lot.
But thou, who knowest my most hidden thought
And deepest source of sorrow and despite,
Hast thou forgot whom thou didst once divine?
And was it in thy heart to wrong me so?
Ah, call not sorrow sin, old friend of mine!
But rather drop a tear of ruth divine
Into the cup where I would drown my woe,
In memory of thy love of long ago!"

[1] Page 300 of the original.

XVI.

THE celebrated Liszt had a pupil named Hermann, who afterwards became a member of a religious community. Hermann often played the piano in private for the benefit of two or three friends. Alfred admired him, both as a pianist and a composer; and, while the musician improvised, the poet would devise verses adapted to the movement of the music. They composed together in this way three songs, — "Bonjour, Suzon!" "Non, Suzon, pas encore!" and "Adieu, Suzon!" Another melody by the same master, adapted to Italian words, was afterwards adopted by Steinberg for the *barcarolle*, which he sings in "Bettine." One day, in the spring of 1845, Hermann disappeared. Divine grace had suddenly touched his heart, and we heard of him later as a barefoot Carmelite in a convent in the south of France.

Just about the time that this miraculous conversion took place, I received from M. de Salvandy, minister of public instruction, a literary mission to Venice. The archives of the republic were to be searched for documents relating to the history of France. My commission was for six months; but I remained in Venice a year. Our uncle Desherbiers had held, for more than thirty years, the modest government office of sub-prefect of Mirecourt; and I proposed to my brother to pay a

visit to this worthy uncle. We accordingly left Paris for Mirecourt in company, in the early days of May, 1845; and we stayed there six weeks. I then went to Epinal, whence I repaired to Venice by way of Munich, Innspruch, and Trent. Alfred remained half the summer in the Vosges, proceeding from Mirecourt to Épinal, and from Épinal to Plombières, much fêted by the good people of Lorraine, and a great favorite in the pleasant family of the department prefect.

I had been six months in Venice when, one evening in November, a clever Frenchman, named M. de Trobriant, came up to me on the square of Saint Mark, and spoke with enthusiasm of a "proverb," which he had just been reading in the "Revue des Deux Mondes." "Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée." I made haste to look up the number containing this proverb, and to me who had been so long absent the picture of Parisian life which it presented was delightful. Moreover, I recognized the characters. That of the count was so very like that I seemed to see my brother far away, seizing his hat at every peal of the bell, leaving the door open, and unable to decide whether to go or stay. I should have had more difficulty in identifying the lady, if the title of "marquise" had not given me a clew; but I soon learned that I had guessed correctly. The conversation had taken place almost exactly as reported in the "proverb." The termination only was fictitious. The marquise remained a widow, the poet departed, and the closed door was not opened again until the occasion of his next visit, when they adopted a new device.

It should be said, in praise of the actor Bocage, that

it was he who first pushed to the verge of achievement the bold enterprise of having a piece of Alfred de Musset's played before a paying public. Bocage, the manager of the Odéon, was positively determined to risk a representation of the "Caprice." Mlle. Naptal went so far as to learn the part of Mme. Léry. The author, mindful of the "Nuit Vénitienne," anticipated a second failure, attended none of the rehearsals, and gave Bocage *carte blanche.* I never knew why this project was abandoned, but probably on account of some one of the thousand accidents which are always happening in the theatre; such as the engagement of Mlle. Naptal at the Comédie Française, or the offer of some piece which seemed to contain surer guarantees of success than the "Caprice." When I returned from Venice, both manager and author had given up the scheme.

A piece of good fortune coming at this time occasioned great joy in our family, and a great disturbance of our domestic arrangements. Our sister was married and left home. She was to live in the provinces, and her mother went with her to superintend the beginning of her housekeeping. I stayed in Paris a while to be company for my brother, and again we talked of that beloved Italy whence I had just returned the second time. After this, I accepted an invitation from my sister to visit her at her own house; and, while I was away, a young actress made her *début* at the Gymnase. Rose Chéri found, in the part of Clarissa Harlowe,[1] an occasion for the display of talents of which she herself had

[1] This piece was by M. Léon Guillard, now keeper of the records at the Comédie Française. — P. M.

hardly been conscious. Alfred de Musset was particularly fond of Richardson's fine romance, and frequently read it over. He was attracted by the title of the play, and took such a fancy to the actress, and such a liking for the piece, that he attended the performances at the Gymnase for thirty successive nights. When I returned from Anjou, I found him still under the spell of this daily pleasure, and almost as enthusiastic about Rose Chéri, as he had once been about Rachel and Pauline Garcia. The very night that I came back I had to go with him to the Gymnase. His artist's passion lasted as long as the performances of "Clarissa Harlowe" continued.

The winter of 1847 was a sad one for us: our apartment seemed half as large again as formerly. Of what use was it to make jokes at table? There was no longer any one to laugh at them, and no more music after dinner! Those melodies from Mozart, those *sonatas* of Beethoven, once to be had for the asking, were heard no more. The very piano had disappeared, leaving a great gap in the furniture of the drawing-room. I besought my brother to break the monotony of the winter by an excursion to Anjou or some other warm region; but I could not tear him away from Paris, even though he complained that he knew every paving-stone in it. Not before September could I induce him to go; but then we went together for sea-bathing to Croisic, and afterwards to our sister's house, where Alfred was so happy that I fancied him fixed for a long time. He stayed a month, and that was long for him; but, when he returned to Paris, an incredible piece of news awaited him. The

"Caprice" was to be played at the Théâtre Français! The fortunes of this piece were truly strange.

Mme. Allan Despréaux, who had been quite forgotten by the Parisians, was in high favor at the court of Russia. Admitted to the best society, she had taken on the tone and manners of a great lady. One day at Saint Petersburg, she was advised to go and see a piece which was being played at a small theatre, and in which there was an admirable female part, which it was thought might suit her. They made up a party for the little theatre, and saw the piece played in Russian; and Mme. Allan Despréaux was so taken with it that she wanted it translated into French, in order that she might play it at court. Now this play was the "Caprice," and it came very near being translated into the language in which it was originally written. The Emperor Nicholas would certainly have ordered it to be done, if a lady familiar with French literature — and there are a good many such in Russia, more even than in France — had not apprised Mme. Allan that the Russian play which she thought so meritorious was itself a translation. The volume containing the "Caprice" was common at Saint Petersburg. A copy was presented to Mme. Allan; and the piece was played before the court, and found great favor.

Nothing of all this was known at Paris; but when M. Buloz, administrator of the Comédie Française, was treating with Mme. Allan by letter for a return to the French stage, she expressed a wish to make her reappearance before the French public in the parts of Célimène and Mme. de Léry. Everybody at the Comédie Française, except M. Buloz, was amazed at this selection.

Nobody knew where the little piece came from ; but the great actress, confident in her experience, persisted in her resolve. When he came back to Paris in October, Alfred de Musset found the arrangements far advanced. During one of the rehearsals of the "Caprice," he heard, from the side-scenes where he was, M. Samson, who was hidden among the shadows of the orchestra, calling out in a highly scandalized tone, — "*Rebonsoir*, my dear? What language is that, pray?"

This would seem to prove that, in 1847, there was still some doubt at the Comédie Française whether the author of the "Caprice" wrote in a style which one might adopt without compromising himself in the house of the correct and brilliant M. Scribe! However, the piece was brought out on the 27th of November, and then uncertainty ceased. The success of the "Caprice" was an important dramatic event, and the extraordinary popularity of that little play did more for the author than all his other works had done. In the course of a few days, the name of Alfred de Musset had penetrated to those middle classes of the public whom books and poetry never reach. The sort of interdict which had weighed upon him was removed as if by enchantment, and not a day passed without the quotation of some of his verses.

When the thunderbolt of Feb. 24, 1848, fell upon us, Alfred de Musset saw with regret the departure of a royal family in which he had had a friend. The Revolution was destined to affect him no less than many others, but in a wholly unexpected way. The new minister of the interior held, it was said, a sort of private

nocturnal council, where were elaborated those "republican bulletins" which were read by the population of Paris with amazement, and often with affright. When he saw among the names of the privy councillors that of a person who had no decent pretext for wishing him anything but good, my brother thought that he might perhaps keep his librarian's place; but he was mistaken. One of M. Ledru Rollin's first acts was the removal of Alfred de Musset. One journal cried out against this proceeding; another denied the fact. Alfred then published the letter of dismissal which he had received. It was couched in terms of brutal brevity, and signed by a certain secretary-general named Cartaret. I was at that time contributing some literary articles to the "National," which was just then enjoying a popularity for which it was unprepared by its twenty years' life as an organ of the opposition. I requested one of my friends on the "National" to speak to the minister of the interior; and he did so, but without effect.

Although he owed little to that Revolution which took away the surest part of his income, Alfred could not refrain from admiring, in one of its most sudden and energetic manifestations, that French nation — so full of life, elasticity, and unexpected resources — of which M. de Tocqueville has said that it is capable of inspiring strong love or strong hatred, but never indifference. During the sorrowful days of June, when blood ran in the streets, Alfred exposed himself freely, and spent several nights in bivouac. Amid the episodes of our civil war, the course of his dramatic triumphs was uninterrupted. As a sequel to the "Caprice," the Théâtre Français

wanted to bring out the "proverb," "Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée," and the comedy in three acts, "Il ne faut jurer de rien," out of which MM. Provost, Brindeau, Got, and Mmes. Mante and Luther, constructed a perfect gem. This last piece was played for the first time on the twenty-second of June, 1848, at the very hour when a formidable insurrection was piling barricades all around. The Théâtre Historique gave several representations of the "Chandelier," which afterwards went back to the Comédie Française. Rachel asked the author for a part, and Mlle. Augustine Brohan displayed her wit and her coquetries for the same end. After an extremely sprightly correspondence with the poet, the queen of *soubrettes* obtained a half promise. Alfred wrote "Louison;" but some sort of misunderstanding occurred, the true story of which I never knew; and the part was given to Mlle. Anäis, and lost nothing by the transfer.

On the third of May, 1849, a musical and dramatic *matinée* was given in Pleyel's rooms for the benefit of the poor. Mlle. Rachel, Mme. Viardot, Mme. Allan, and MM. Roger, Got, and Regnier, lent their assistance; and Alfred, who had been informed of the plan some time before, wrote a "proverb" for the occasion, entitled "On ne saurait penser à tout," the insertion of which in the programme proved an attraction to a great many persons. The majority of the spectators were pretty young ladies in spring toilets, and the author met once more what he used to call *his* public of "little pink noses." The "proverb" succeeded so far as to cause a great deal of laughter; but, when it came to be produced

at the Théâtre Français, the audience of the Rue Rochechouart was no longer the majority, the Monday papers were hostile, and the piece was played only ten or twelve times. The "Chandelier" was welcomed with a degree of favor which repaired this slight reverse, notwithstanding it was criticised as immoral. All Paris went to see it; and, when M. Léon Faucher undertook to have it suppressed after forty performances, the author was so much disturbed that he composed a moral ending in order to satisfy the minister. In this new version, Fortunio went to the wars with Clavaroche, while Jacqueline came under her old man's rod once more. But this alteration did not satisfy the conscience of M. Léon Faucher, who would hear nothing of it.

In the beginning of 1850, our household was broken up. Our mother, attracted by her daughter to Anjou, gave up her large apartment; and we had to separate. It was a cruel moment for us both, for until then we had always lived at home. Alfred took lodgings at first in the Rue Rumfort; but he found himself too far away from me, and soon came to live in the Rue Mont Thabor, I having taken a suite in the Rue des Pyramides. Our mother had found him a housekeeper capable of attending him with a devotion almost equal to that of Sister Marcelline, whom he regretted so much in times of illness. The zeal and good sense of Mlle. Colin spared my brother many anxieties, and insured him the care which his health required. Naturally disposed to anxiety, it alarmed him to feel that he had only himself to rely on for all the exigencies of life; but, when the first moment was over, he faced the new situation with

firmness and courage. That terrible phantom of necessity from which he had shrunk at the age of thirty, he found himself prepared to confront by those political catastrophes which had smitten sorely many lives beside his own. He had done nothing since 1847, save passively to watch the second career opened by the theatre to the productions of his youth; but, at the age of forty, his taste for work suddenly revived.

That nothing may be omitted in my account of his latest works, I will now go back a few years, and relate one of those trifling incidents which it pleased him, with his poetic imagination, to regard as fiats of destiny.

One day in April, 1846, Rachel had invited him to dine with her. The other guests were men of fashion, and all very rich. During the dinner, the left-hand neighbor of the hostess remarked upon a very beautiful ring which she wore. The ring was generally admired, the skill of the goldsmith eulogized, and every guest in turn paid some compliment to the precious jewel.

"Gentlemen," said Rachel, "since this work of art has the honor to please you, I will put it up at auction. How much am I offered?"

One of the guests made a bid of five hundred francs, another of a thousand, another of fifteen hundred. In a moment, the ring was run up to three thousand francs.

"And you, my poet," said Rachel, "are you not going to bid? How much will you give me?"

"I will give you my heart," replied Alfred.

"The ring is yours."

And with the impulsiveness of a child, Rachel actually drew off her ring and flung it into the poet's plate. When

they rose from the table, Alfred, who thought that the joke had gone far enough, wanted to give back the ring; but Rachel refused to take it. "By Jupiter," she said, "I was entirely in earnest. You gave me your heart, and I would not give it back for a hundred thousand crowns. The bargain is closed, and there is nothing more to be said about it."

However, despite her resistance, Alfred took her hand gently, and slipped the ring upon her finger. Rachel then drew it off again, and held it out to him with a supplicating and theatrical gesture. "Dear poet," she said, in a voice of genuine emotion, "you would not dare refuse this little present, if I should offer it to you on the morrow of the day when I shall play the famous part which you are going to write for me, and which I have been expecting all my life. Keep the ring, I beseech you, as a pledge of the promise you have made. Whenever, either owing to my fault or otherwise, you renounce for good and all the idea of writing the part I have desired so much, then bring me the ring, and I will take it back."

As she said this, she bent her knee, and displayed all the enchanting grace which nature gave her as an auxiliary of her genius. Of course, the ring had to be accepted on the conditions which she proposed. The poet came home, a good deal touched by the incident, well disposed and fully resolved this time to profit by the occasion. A few days after the scene which I have described, Rachel went to England. She had promised faithfully to write to *her poet*, but she did not keep her word; and Alfred, who knew by experience the fitful

humor of the great *tragédienne,* augured ill of her silence. It was just then that Rose Chéri was playing "Clarissa Harlowe" so successfully. Alfred had not hesitated to say before Rachel all the good which he thought of the young actress at the Gymnase, and probably Rachel thought that she discovered a purpose injurious to herself in the praise thus lavished upon another. At all events, without a word of explanation, she assumed toward the poet a harsh and scornful demeanor, to which he only replied by returning the valuable ring, which she appeared to have forgotten. She put it on again without a word of remonstrance.

Four years later, in March or April, 1851, Rachel gave a ceremonious dinner at the hotel which she had built on the Rue Trudon. Alfred was invited, and the mistress of the house took his arm when they were going in to dinner. Alfred trod on Rachel's gown, who said with her grand air, —

"When one gives a lady his arm, one should take care where he puts his feet."

"When one becomes a princess," replied the poet, "and builds a hotel, one should order of one's architect a broader staircase."

The evening began unfortunately; but after dinner there was a reconciliation. Alfred made a smiling allusion to the time when he had supped with Roxana and the covers were tin, and Rachel was amused by the reminiscence.

"Perhaps you think," she said, "when you see all my luxury and my splendid silver-plate, that I am not as amiable as I used to be; but I can prove the contrary."

"How so?" demanded Alfred.

"I will go and see you, and entreat you once more to write me something."

And in fact she did come the next day, and talked theatre for an hour. During the days which followed, she came several times, and at last obtained the promise of a part. But Alfred was a little suspicious of that fickleness of mind of which Rachel had already given him so many proofs. He dallied. The time of leave-takings arrived, and Rachel once more left for England.

A new actress, then in the flower of her youth and beauty, had lately made her *début* at the Comédie Française. She asked for parts, and did so with the full intention of playing them. Alfred turned his thoughts in that direction, and arranged for the stage the "Caprices de Marianne." Madeline Brohan gratefully accepted the part of Marianne, which Rachel might have taken if she had understood her true interests. But in 1851, in the midst of her success, Rachel wrote from London to *her author* a pressing letter, to remind him of his engagement. Then, when she returned to Paris, she learned that he had lately written for Rose Chéri the part of Bettine, of which more anon; and it may be that a touch of jealousy was blended with her fresh importunities for the promised *rôle*. Alfred, moved by her constancy, now arranged the plan of an entirely new drama in five acts, the scene of which was to be laid in Venice in the fifteenth century.

In the midst of these negotiations, "Bettine" was played with but moderate success; and the ardor of Rachel seemed suddenly to cool. Alfred de Musset,

offended by the silence which she maintained toward him, put the unfinished work away among his waste papers, with the remark, —

"Adieu, Rachel! It is yourself whom I have buried for ever in this drawer."[1]

All was indeed over between Rachel and him; and we shall have nothing more to say of that highly gifted actress whom nature seemed to have created and sent into the world to act in concert with the author of "Lorenzaccio," but who could never keep on good terms with him long enough for him to complete an acting play. No doubt Alfred de Musset was quite as much to blame as she. He ought to have laughed at her humors, and pushed his work forward to its completion, thus attaining the lucrative end of public representation in spite of temporary obstacles. Many others have given him the example; but the others were not poets, and we must take poets as we find them.

To return to "Bettine." Alfred remembered Mme. Rose Chéri, and the pleasure which he had taken six months before in the performances of "Clarissa Harlowe." The part of Bettine, which he wrote expressly for her, she accepted with delight; nor have I ever yet understood why the piece should have been coldly received by the audience at the Gymnase Dramatique. It was played only twenty or thirty times, a very small number for a *genre* theatre. And yet I consider it one of the most perfect productions of the pen which wrote

[1] The reader can judge from the fragment of "Faustine," published among his posthumous works, how much it is to be regretted that the piece was never finished. — P. M.

the "Caprice;" and, if it did not obtain the success which it deserved, I think it can only have been by reason of that very perfection. It was owing to the poetical quality of a style unfamiliar to the ears of that public, to the ripeness of the author's genius, and his profound knowledge of the human heart. The bewildered spectators listened with extreme attention, but the beauties of the work were above their comprehension. The last word has not yet been said about "Bettine," and some time or other the world will recur to it.[1]

The story of Rachel's vagaries and the resentment of our poet has carried me farther on than I intended. I must go back a year and speak of a little masterpiece, for which we are chiefly indebted to the ingenious insistence of M. Véron, and also, perhaps, to Alfred de Musset's own indignation at the sort of criticism which had been bestowed on "Louison" and "On ne saurait penser à tout." In 1850, notwithstanding his desire to remain faithful to the "Revue des Deux Mondes," Alfred had yielded to the entreaties of M. Véron, who opened to him the columns of the "Constitutionnel" on most advantageous terms. "Carmoisine" came out in the latter journal; and it is assuredly one of Alfred de Musset's finest works, — to my mind, indeed, the deepest and most moving of them all. When I read the passage in which Carmoisine confides her hopeless love to the jester Minuccio, it seems to me as though the scene had been sketched by the hand of Göthe or Shakspeare.

[1] There is a letter of Mme. Allan Despréaux inserted in the notes to the large edition, which shows that this actress, who was very clever and had excellent taste, was particularly fond of "Bettine." She would have played the part herself if she had not been too old, and already ill. — P. M.

But we will leave to others the appreciation of this poetic work.

M. Véron had absolute confidence in the powers of Alfred de Musset. Without knowing how much the MS. of "Carmoisine" would prove to be worth, he agreed in advance to pay a thousand francs an act, and to leave the author at liberty to write three or five, as he might think fit. Alfred, incapable of adding an act to a piece which, in his own opinion, required only three, felt that his work would be well paid on the prescribed conditions; but M. Véron was so charmed with the piece when he came to read it, that he wanted to pay for it as if it had had five acts. The author refused to accept so large a sum, and in the end they halved the difference. I mention this circumstance, because it affords a glimpse of two sufficiently rare characters, — a generous publisher and a disinterested author.

Alfred de Musset had fancied himself too lightly esteemed by the classicists of the French Academy to aspire to become one of their number; but, encouraged by M. Merimée, he decided to make the application, and the Academy did itself honor when it opened its arms to the poet of youth. He might have done without the Academy; but if, after his name had been proposed, he had been allowed to die before the doors of the Institute were opened to him, the Academy would have repented it, and public opinion would have condemned its course. The author of the "Nuits" cared more than I should have expected for this mark of distinction, which he regarded as an indispensable consecration of his talent. On the day when he pronounced

the eulogy on M. Dupaty, to whose chair he succeeded, I heard, among the elegant audience of "little pink noses," murmurs of amazement and approbation at the blonde locks and youthful air of the candidate. He might have been taken for thirty.

His election was attended with some difficulty. Among the grave personages by whom he was surrounded on that day, not more than a dozen knew his works at all, and these were acquainted with some few pages only.

M. de Lamartine himself publicly proclaimed that he had never read them. Others condemned them out of hand without wanting to know more. On the eve of the ballot, M. Ancelot, who was particularly fond of the candidate and resolved to give him his vote, said, in the garden of the Palais Royal, to the publisher Charpentier, "Poor Alfred is a lovable fellow and a charming man of society; but, between ourselves, he never did know how to make verses, and he never will."

M. Fortoul was then minister of public instruction. He wanted to testify in some way his good-will towards our poet, and accordingly he paid him a great deal of attention, and repeatedly asked him to dinner almost *en famille*.[1] One evening the minister said he would like to give him a subject for a poem. Alfred never enjoyed working to order. His independent Muse did not readily obey the behests of any one, and the evening that this proposal was made he came home considerably alarmed. But M. Fortoul's kindness had touched his heart, and he consented to consider the

[1] M. Fortoul was one of the editors of the "Revue des Deux Mondes," and very fond of people of talent. — P. M.

various themes which had been suggested, and among which he was to be allowed freedom of choice. One of them struck him agreeably, and without making any definite promise he put in his pocket a sort of prospectus, and said he would think it over, and send a prompt answer if he decided to treat the subject. The next time he came, he brought his poem almost complete. It was the "Songe d'Auguste." The minister was so gratified that he was bent on a solemn representation of the piece at some court festival. Charles Gounod composed music for the choruses, the best artists were to be selected from all the theatres, and the parts of Octavia and Augustus were already assigned to Rachel and M. Bressant.

But vague murmurs of disapprobation suddenly arose, and a bucket of ice was thrown upon the flame. The minister himself seemed afraid that he had been imprudent, and said no more of the proposed performance. The next year the Eastern war broke out. Now the most important scene in the poem was a dialogue between Livia and Octavia, concerning peace and war, and the author had naturally concluded in favor of peace. After the bombardment of Sinope, the "Songe d'Auguste" was out of date; and by the time that peace was concluded, two years later, oblivion had swept over the whole thing. Moreover, M. Fortoul, who alone had been interested in the work, died suddenly, although not before he had repaired the wrong which M. Ledru Rollin had done the author. The following is the letter which he wrote to Alfred de Musset, after reading the "Songe d'Auguste."

"I have the pleasure, my dear sir, of informing you that you have been appointed librarian of the department of public instruction. This office, which you have never solicited, but which I have long wished to confer upon you, has been rendered vacant by a removal which disturbs no position already acquired. I esteem myself infinitely happy to be able partially to repair the wrong done you by our now forgotten misunderstanding. I only regret that I have so little to offer one whose talent reflects the utmost lustre upon the literature of our time.

Believe me your most devoted,

H. FORTOUL.[1]

I have already had occasion to offer proofs of the fact that poets have, at odd moments, a sort of second sight. Precisely because they are not usually occupied with public affairs, when a political event does stir them, and cause them to reflect, they understand better than the vulgar its range and signification. If inanimate objects are to them *voiceless thoughts*, if they are searching for eternal truth even when they look upon a blade of grass, they have also their hours of meditation upon the actions of men and the needs of nations. When they express what they feel, they show us what we are

[1] M. Fortoul's regard for Alfred de Musset dated a long way back. Incontestable proof of this may be found in the "Revue des Deux Mondes" for Sept. 1, 1834. This number contains an article very laudatory of the "Spectacle dans un Fauteuil." The author of this article, which is now very curious reading, is comparing, apropos of "Lorenzaccio," the Florentine republicans of 1536 with the French of 1830. "These merchants," he says, "let themselves be tricked out of their Republic, almost as foolishly as we have done ourselves." Farther on, M. Fortoul congratulates the author of "Lorenzaccio" on having fathomed "the plebeian desires which inflame us." It is to be observed that the minister of public instruction under the second empire had not always been in favor of a perpetual dictatorship. — P. M.

capable of feeling without being able to express it. When they take the trouble to look, they see things which our eyes do not distinguish.

The moment that Alfred de Musset learned that a Piedmontese army corps had been sent to the Crimea, he drew a host of conclusions, which led him almost immediately to the prevision of a radical change in the destinies of Italy. I told him that he was going too fast, and that Austria would never consent to a rearrangement of the map of Europe which would involve the loss of some of her wealthiest provinces. "Justice," he replied, "is not as difficult as it is supposed to be. We cannot keep the branches of the tree of life from budding; and there is a people the other side of the mountains which is determined to live. Egotists think that the world was made for them, and smile at the sufferings of a great nation; but we ought rather to smile at their political schemes. Intelligence and freedom go hand in hand. It may be that the liberty which we have looked for so long is not far off, for it travels by ways which we know not."

Probably there was no connection whatever between the arrival of Mme. Ristori at Paris and the secret schemes of M. Cavour; but Alfred de Musset liked to look upon the visit of that great artist as presaging the intimate union thenceforth to subsist between France and Italy. His attendance on the performance of "Mirra" and "Marie Stuart" was so constant that he never missed one unless he were absolutely ill in bed. The bust of Mme. Ristori by the Italian sculptor Lanzirotti was placed in his little museum, on a tall pedestal con-

structed for the purpose; and he liked to play upon the name by calling the noble figure the "Italia ristorata." Poetry also was to have been invoked to pay tribute to the great foreign *tragédienne;* and Alfred began some verses, which unfortunately he never even committed to paper. Illness prevented him from completing them.[1] The performances of "Mirra" were destined to be his last pleasure, and admiration for Ristori his last enthusiasm.

[1] The irregular fragment of these stanzas which M. Paul de Musset quotes from memory cannot well be translated, and seems hardly worthy even of transcription. — TR.

XVII.

THE health of Alfred de Musset had seemed for a long time to be declining. The organic affection whose first symptoms I had observed in 1842, and which had developed stealthily, made rapid progress during the winter of 1856. I do not know why the physician, who understood the nature of it perfectly, should have thought fit to keep it a secret. It was an affection of the valves of the aorta. I began to observe the well-known indications of heart disease; but these alarming symptoms would sometimes disappear altogether, and give place to that air of health and vigor which we associate with his age. He would never submit to any curative treatment, except when he was confined to his bed; and, therefore, I took the paroxysms of his malady for so many fresh accidents. One day I found him stretched in a *chaise longue* which he had recently bought; and, as he showed off his acquisition, he said, "I hoped I should have died young; but, if it is God's will that I should stay some time longer in this weariful world, I must be resigned. And this is the article of furniture in which I propose to grow old."

Severe cold and extreme heat were alike injurious to him; and, despite his repugnance to quitting Paris, Alfred went for three years in succession to the seaside; not to try bathing, which would have aggravated his complaints, but to breathe the fresh and tonic air.

In 1854, he visited Croisic, whence he went to our sister's at Angers, where he stayed a month. The two following years he spent his vacation at Havre. During his last journey, while living at the Hôtel Frascati, he became very intimate with an English family, the head of which was a man of note, and also of a most simple and kindly character. The daughters of M. Lyster, who were both at the fascinating age between childhood and maidenhood, became very fond of the invalid poet, and showed their affection by the most assiduous attentions. Alfred, on his part, became a child again; entered into the games of the two sisters, and devised others to amuse them. He was particularly successful in making them talk, for he always had the faculty of lending his own wit to people whom he fancied. As I have said before, he loved and venerated, above every thing else, youth, innocence, and ingenuousness. Only those who knew him well can understand the delight he took in the society of these pleasant girls.

One evening he stayed out later than was prudent upon the mole at Hâvre, and had a feverish attack in consequence. He did not come down to breakfast the next morning, and the little English girls were uneasy and sent their father to make inquiries. The idea of passing a day without seeing their new friend was intolerable. I do not know whether his room was on the ground floor, or whether its windows opened upon some sort of verandah; but the children brought their chairs to his open window and established themselves there, and the invalid from his bed took part in their games and their conversation. He enjoyed it so much that the fever

subsided, and the time flew fast in this delightful intimacy. Everybody was dismayed when the day of parting came. Alfred said his farewells, and mounted into the omnibus which was to take him to the railway. There his trunk was not to be found. He called for it angrily, but no one knew what had become of it. It was impossible to return to Paris without this important piece of luggage, so he mounted the omnibus once more and went back to the Hôtel Frascati. At the door of the house, he was met by loud applause: the two little maidens were lying in wait for him. They clapped their hands, and showed him his trunk, which they had themselves dragged aside amid the confusion of the departure. He could not go now for several hours, and their joy was such that he remained in Hâvre two or three more days.

One evening in the autumn he found, when he went home, the card of M. Lyster. He was enchanted, and set out the next day to visit his Hâvre friends. They were lodging at the Champs Elysées, and the fine weather and warm sunshine tempted him to walk. As he paced the long avenue, he reflected on the different manners prevailing in town and at the seaside. There would not be in Paris the delightful ease and freedom which had constituted the charm of their former intercourse. They would fancy that they had a thousand things to say, but when they came to revert to their common memories and pleasures, they would find that they scarcely knew each other. "My maidens will have other friends about them," mused the poet, slackening his steps, "fellow-countrymen perhaps. One of them may have a suitor.

I shall only be a caller like any other, and possibly a tiresome one. Farewell, sweet familiarity and childish merriment and play! Am I sure that I could myself recover the mirthful abandonment of the seaside? Perhaps I shall presently be returning along this avenue, regretting a lost illusion, and the bloom of a dear memory destroyed. It would be better not to touch the butterfly's wing."

In the midst of such reflections, he reached the door. He was divided between a longing to see the young girls again, and the fear of disturbing his cherished memories of travel. The latter scruple prevailed. Instead of pulling the bell, he retraced his steps. He went home, and never saw his Hâvre friends again.

One winter evening, a regular poet's fancy seized him for making a retrospective and nocturnal visit to Italy and the age of the Renaissance. He begged Horace de Viel Castel, who lodged in the Louvre, to open the picture gallery for him at night. He was accordingly admitted, at ten o'clock in the evening, into the gallery of the Italian school, with a portable lamp of the kind used in torchlight processions. He stayed there a long while, lost in thought, and came out well pleased, saying that he had lived with the old masters that night, and that there were two for whom he would cheerfully have mixed colors and cut pencils, — Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci.

In the month of March, 1857, M. Émile Augier was proposed at the Academy. Alfred de Musset, who was very fond of him, took a keen interest in his success. On the night before the ballot, he was seriously ill; and

M. Augier, fearing that he would not be able to be present, besought me to use all my efforts to induce him to attend the meeting. When the time arrived, I found my brother resolved to go, in spite of the incessant palpitation of the heart which incommoded him extremely. He sent for a carriage, but there was none to be found. The rain was falling in torrents, and the hour of the ballot was about to strike. Alfred took my arm and started, notwithstanding the storm. He walked slowly along the Rue Rivoli, obliged at every twenty steps to stop and take breath. Finally, on the corner of the Rue des Pyramides, I succeeded in stopping a passing carriage. He entered it, and arrived just in time to vote. Revived by the out-of-door air and his satisfaction at having voted, and exulting also in the success of his candidate, Alfred went and dined at a restaurant and thence to the play. His housekeeper scolded him for his imprudence. "Never you mind!" he said, "Very likely it is the last time. My friend Tattet is calling me, and I think I shall rejoin him before long."

Tattet, who was just as old as he, had died not long before, from an attack of gout.

M. Empis, of the Academy, struck by the change in his colleague's appearance, inquired of me about his health, and asked if he were following any course of treatment. I replied that he was unwilling to do so; but that he had an excellent physician who gave him directions and advice informally. "We will force him to take care of himself," said M. Empis, "and this is the way we will manage." I will get him invited to Saint Cloud; and, when there, he will have to

obey the physician of the house. M. R—— will cure him.

I thought this little conspiracy might possibly succeed. Once at Saint Cloud, Alfred would submit to guidance; but, while waiting the return of warm weather for the accomplishment of this project, I made a trip of a few days to Augers. While I was away, Alfred received an invitation to dine at the Palais Royal with Prince Napoleon. He was very ill, but he was determined to go. Dressing fatigued him so much that he was late, and when he arrived the company was already at table. After dinner, wishing to efface the unfavorable impression made by his late arrival, he drew near the Prince and engaged in the conversation, which he soon controlled, and rendered it grave and gay by turns, but always interesting. It is not so long ago but that many of the persons present still remember that evening, and they have told me that Alfred de Musset never seemed to them more animated and pleasing. It was his last evening out. When he went home, he took his bed, and never rose from it again.

I was still at Augers, when I received on the 26th of April, a letter from Alfred's housekeeper, begging me to return. I brought forward some pretext of business and set out for Paris. When I arrived, I found my brother in bed; but quiet, and without fever. The fainting fits which had now become habitual with him recurred from time to time; but in the intervals he did not suffer. He could listen to reading or talk tranquilly. The housekeeper whom I had always thought an excellent judge of his condition, appeared less alarmed than she had

been, and I took courage. The improvement lasted until April 29th. On the 30th, I thought the doctor anxious during the day ; and his anxiety infected me as soon as I heard him pronounce the terrible word *consultation.* At seven o'clock in the morning of May 1st, M. Morel-Lavallée had an interview with the accomplished M. Rostan, whom I had summoned. Each of them told me separately that there was no immediate danger, and that they would come again the next day at the same hour. The day was not a bad one. Our invalid had obeyed all the instructions implicitly, and he experienced decided relief. He congratulated himself in the evening on his docility. "Tranquillity is a fine thing," he said. "It is a great mistake for us to be so afraid of death, which is only extreme exhaustion."

He was in an admirable frame of mind. He made plans, — one, among others, for going back to Hâvre ; but, since he must always have some subject of anxiety, he regretted not having accepted the proposition of his publisher, who had wanted him to surrender all pecuniary interest in his works, in consideration of a yearly payment of twenty-four hundred francs during his life. I had no difficulty in showing him that he need not regret the conclusion of this affair. He then made the most minute inquiries about my occupations, and afterwards asked in succession after every one of the persons whom he loved, as if he were holding a review of his personal attachments. His questions multiplied. The angelic face of Sister Marcelline came back to his memory and smiled upon him. We talked, still in the most peaceful fashion, until an hour after midnight, when he

suddenly started up and pressed his hand upon his heart as though he felt some extraordinary disturbance there. His face took on a strange expression of surprise and concentrated attention. His eyes opened to their utmost width. I asked him if he suffered. He shook his head, and to my other questions replied only by these words, as he lay back upon his pillows, — "Sleep! At last I am going to sleep."

Sleeplessness had always been his most implacable enemy, and I took this for a favorable crisis in his disease. It was death. He closed his eyes, and opened them no more. His calm and regular breathing died gradually away. His last sigh was unaccompanied by a single convulsive or agonized movement. Death, for which he had wished so often, had come to him as a friend, in the guise of slumber. A congestion of the heart was the immediate cause. Was he conscious that he was dying? I do not know. Perhaps he desired to spare me the anguish of a last farewell. Perhaps his weariness with life, his sense of deliverance, and the gentle mastery of slumber, left him no strength to utter any supreme good-by.

When the first rays of dawn fell on his face, a supernatural beauty was diffused over it, as though the great thoughts to which his genius had imparted an imperishable form were shining round him like an aureole. The attendants who took care of him could not believe in this unexpected departure. "It is impossible," they said. "He is asleep. He will wake."

I touched my lips to his forehead, but it was already cold as marble.

XVIII.

IT cannot be denied that nature sometimes imprisons a beautiful soul in a deformed or uncomely frame; but usually she is pleased to bestow upon poets the gift of fine looks. When we consider the portraits of Molière, Racine, Tasso, and Byron, we are glad to see in their features a style of beauty corresponding with the character of their genius.

In his whole personal appearance, Alfred de Musset displayed the symmetry and harmony which constitute perfection. His figure of medium height (five feet four inches) remained slender and elegant so long as he preserved his health. When he was a young man, he looked but a boy, and in mature life he was often taken for a very young man. At twenty he was the perfect type of the graceful page of old-time courts, and he very often wore the costume of one at fancy balls. His face was impressive from uniting two kinds of beauty, — regularity of feature and vivacity of expression. His blue eyes were full of fire. His delicate and slightly aquiline nose recalled the portraits of Van Dyck; and his friends frequently noticed the likeness between the two. His mouth was rather large, and his lips somewhat too full, — less so than La Fontaine's, however; but they lent themselves with extreme mobility to the expression of his feelings, and betrayed all the keen susceptibility of his heart. Under the influence of the softer emotions,

like pity or compassion, they quivered imperceptibly. You saw at once that that mouth could become eloquent with passion, or smile with easy irony in conversation. But his finest feature of all was his forehead, of which the shading suggested all the bumps which phrenology has designated as the seats of the most precious faculties. Whether that science be genuine or chimerical, it is certain that it attributed to the author of the "Nights" (although not invented specially for him) poetic sensibility, reflective power, perspicacity, ardor of mind, and an instinctive appreciation of all the arts.

There are but two portraits of Alfred de Musset which give a just idea of him,— the medallion of David d'Angers, and the crayon by Charles Landelle. Unlike as the faces are, it should be remembered that they are separated by a long interval of time, — the one likeness having been taken in 1831, the other in 1854. Landelle was mistaken in giving his sketch a dreamy aspect. Alfred himself used to complain that the artist had made him look as if he were asleep, whereas his usual expression was very spirited. This appears in David's medallion to a remarkable degree. Were it not for this trifling defect, the work of Landelle would be perfect. It has, moreover, the advantage over bronze or plaster of reproducing faithfully the beautiful color of the original, and the fine tint of his fair hair; for Alfred de Musset had not a single gray hair when he died.

The other portraits, whatever the talent of their authors, can but bewilder the recollections of the poet's friends, and give a false and inadequate idea to those who never saw him. I would except, however, the mar-

ble bust, made by M. Mezzara for the Théâtre Français. It was executed long after the poet's death; and not only was that difficulty surmounted, but it is even remarkable for the correctness of the likeness.

No description whatever can take the place of the sculptor's chisel or the painter's brush in the representation of a man's physical semblance. As for the soul of the poet, if I have not failed in my task, it will be found the same in the story of his life as in his works, where he has himself depicted it with evident sincerity. A few traits of character will now suffice for the completion of his moral portrait.

I think that there were but two men of genius, before Alfred de Musset, who ever carried so far the courage of perfect frankness; and they were Jean Jaques Rousseau and Lord Byron. It cost them both dear. When the philosopher of Geneva laid bare his soul, he fancied that the revelation of his faults would win them pardon. He was mistaken, for the reason that those faults were enormous, and some of them were unpardonable. The English poet would seem to have gone yet farther than Jean Jacques. He is thought to have yielded to the insensate desire of seeming worse than he really was. It was giving a wide scope to calumny, which profited by the fact so far that posterity is now obliged to defend the poet against himself. The defence will be successful, but not easily so. The French poet has likened himself, not without reason, to the priest who offers his own heart in sacrifice. He offered it naked, for he had nothing to fear from the truth. The well-meaning men who think themselves qualified to reprove him, have

not known Alfred de Musset aright. As for those who do not highly regard the poetry of the heart, and call it *personal poetry*, their prejudices can only harm themselves, and nothing that we can say would remove them. They do not succumb to the charm of the poetry in question, because they lack the heart in which it might awake an echo. It is an unfailing touchstone: "Tell me what poets you love and do not love, and I will tell you what you are."

Alfred de Musset was not satisfied with being sincere. He swore uncompromising hostility to falsehood in every guise. Whenever he encountered it, — and, unhappily, he saw it often and near at hand, — he struck it in the face. He could excuse all, pardon all, except deceit. He never awarded to rhymers without talent who submitted to him their verses that species of good-natured flattery which hurries young aspirants into that dangerous path at the end of which lie the mortifications of a mistaken calling. If he had ever done that cruel deed which others commit without scruple, it would have been for him a source of deep remorse. Liars had made him suspicious; and although he called mistrust "an evil genius, introduced into his nature, but not born there," experience had cultivated the feeling. He despised the human race, yet he who had spoken to him but twice might call him friend. No man was more readily beguiled than he; no heart opened more easily than his. A few advances, a few marks of sympathy, sufficed to obtain from him all that was desired. He was at the mercy of the impressions of the moment, especially in a *tête-à-tête*, and wholly carried away by the charms of conversation.

The Marquis of Manzo, the biographer of Tasso, makes the same remark in the precious notice of the great poet which he has left us. "These beings endowed with excessive sensibility pour out," he says, "involuntarily the treasures of their souls before the first person who presents himself. Animated by the desire to please, they confide their thoughts and feelings to whoever will listen, and even to indifferent persons."

Lord Byron carried this confiding spirit beyond the verge of imprudence. "The first person," says Thomas Moore, "with whom chance brought him in contact became the whole world to him, and might, if he pleased, know all Byron's secrets." And Moore adds, that this is a trait which we find in all times and all countries among those who have received the fatal gift of poesy.

This was the natural disposition of Alfred de Musset; but let his suspicions be ever so slightly roused, and he became the most impenetrable person in the world. He had an extreme distrust of journalists, anecdote-mongers, indiscreet story-tellers, and, above all, of editors, who peddle out to one writer what they have gathered from another. Felix Bonnaire came to see him at least once a week for fifteen years, and was no farther advanced in his intimacy at the end than at the beginning. With M. Charpentier, who repeated to him what he heard elsewhere, Alfred played, for the sixteen years during which they had business relations, a comedy at which we have more than once laughed together. This comedy consisted in the demonstration by every manner of proof

of the fact that his works would not survive, but would be forgotten after his death.

A few great poets have been exceptions to the rule stated by the Marquis de Manzo and Thomas Moore. Göthe, among others, was resolved to become master of himself, and succeeded so well that he has even been reproached for his reticence. Who knows but the greatest mind of Germany, so often accused of insensibility, understood that he could escape the poet's malady only by subjugating his own heart? Tasso, assuredly, would never have been confined in his dungeon, if he had been master of himself as Göthe was; and Göthe himself — who, by the way, wrote a drama of Torquato Tasso — might have run the risk of being thought mad, and confined like his hero, had he not imposed silence upon his own heart amid the pleasures of the court at Weimar.

Even if he had tried, Alfred de Musset could never have assumed the impassible front of Göthe; but he did not carry his rashness to the same length as Byron. To judge of the keenness of his sensibilities, one needs but to open a volume of his poems. One can see by the sonnet to M. Régnier how his intellect received its impulses from his heart. He was passing one evening through the vestibule of the Théâtre Français. A strip of paper pasted on the bill, announced a change in the play. M. Régnier's daughter had died that very day. Alfred was barely acquainted with that excellent comedian, whose talent, however, he admired. The death of a child whom he had never seen, the sorrow of the poor father, smote and saddened him. A great many people

passed through that vestibule, and some of them no doubt were conscious of a similar pang ; but he alone was unable to banish the sorrowful impression. He must needs relieve his feelings, and send to the bereaved father some expression of his sympathy. Hence the beautiful sonnet to M. Régnier. There could not be a better illustration of the poetic organization *par excellence.*

Few men have ever been as susceptible to the sentiment of pity as the author of these verses. The sight of a case of suffering, a sorrow confided to his ear, would agitate him to the extent of haunting his dreams. One evening he came home very late from the Théâtre Français, where he went so often. It was a cold, snowy winter night. Wrapped to his eyes in his cloak, and with his hands in his pockets, he had passed an old beggar playing a hand-organ on the bridge of the Saints Pères. The persistence with which the old man turned his crank, in the hope of obtaining a few *sous*, touched him vaguely ; but the roaring wind and falling snow, and the slippery footway which he was obliged to heed distracted his attention. Arrived at the door of his house on the Quai Voltaire, he still heard far away the plaintive wail of that organ ; and, instead of pulling the bell, he looked at his watch and saw that it was past midnight. "That poor devil," he said to himself, "would have gone home perhaps, if I had given him something. I shall be the cause of his getting an illness in this pestiferous weather."

His imagination pictured the miserable wretch dying of neglect in some garret, and the notion took such hold

of him that he could not advance another step. He went straight back to the beggar on the bridge, and tossed him a five-franc piece. "There," he said, "that is probably more than you will get if you stay there until morning. For God's sake go home to bed! I'll give you the money only on that condition."

The beggar, who had not looked for such a windfall, gathered up his luggage and decamped. I represented to my brother the next day that his alms had been rather magnificent. "It is impossible," he replied, "to pay too high for sleep; and, if I had come home without stopping that d—d music, I should not have slept for the night."

The pitying horror with which he regarded suffering, and his desire to relieve it, did not stop with human beings. Even beasts felt the effects of it. His housekeeper one day apprised him of the critical circumstances of a puppy about to be thrown into the river. He solemnly stayed the execution, and took the condemned creature home. So he was provided with a dog.

The cat's turn came next. Alfred requested that he might have one of the young ones of the first cat who had kittens, not being able to take charge of the entire family. They sent him a frightful little beast, — shaggy, and of a dirty gray color. "I am not very fortunate," he said, contemplating his boarders. "I like only beautiful things, and here I am encumbered with an ugly pug and a regular area cat. But what's to be done? I did not select them, and I cannot help respecting and admiring in these poor beasts — ugly as they are — the phenomenon of life and the work of mysterious nature."

The benefactor had no reason to repent his generosity. By dint of grace and amiability, the kitten won pardon for the homeliness of her garb, and the dog proved to be endowed with all the canine virtues and remarkably intelligent. In fact, the celebrated Marzo was the admiration of all the servant-maids in the neighborhood, and even made himself useful by going alone every evening to the newspaper stand with three *sous* in an envelope, and bringing back the "Presse" in his teeth. Without the assistance of language, he could get the house-door opened, and conclude a business transaction successfully. I shall not praise his love for his master: it would be an insult. Marzo did not consider gratitude a merit, nor devotion a virtue. He will for ever remain ignorant of the fact, that, among the breed of human beings, there are those who are envious and ingrate. Even now, in decrepit old age, he remembers him who is no more; and when the housekeeper, his last faithful friend, speaks to him of his master, he pricks up his ears, and shows that he is thinking of the one he loves, and whose return he is always expecting.[1]

Tattet who had less respect for the *phenomenon of life* got rid of an old dog who was in his way by having him killed. Alfred de Musset, indignant at such cruelty, overwhelmed his friend with reproaches, and treated him

[1] Marzo died of old age Aug. 28, 1864, cared for to the last, and deeply mourned by his old friend. Mme. Martelet, unwilling that his body should be flung into the rubbish cart, charged her husband to bury it. He set out early with Marzo's remains wrapped up in a newspaper. Arrived at Auteuil, he found some men at work digging, and asked permission to put the body in a load of earth which they were about to remove. Marzo was buried in a heap of dirt, under a new street which afterwards received the name of the Rue de Musset. — P. M.

with coolness for some time. Before he could be forgiven, Tattet had to own that he was wrong, and say that he was sorry.

But if the affection of a dog proves nothing, — since these virtuous animals often attach themselves to very objectionable persons, — the master of poor Marzo was able to inspire the same sentiment of tender devotion in others, less easy to win. In the various houses where he lived, and the haunts which he regularly frequented, he was loved with a species of adoration; and it was not always for the sake of his poems and his fame, for some of his friends did not even know how to read. There were those who would have gone through the fire for him. Their zeal and their demonstrations of interest reminded him of that boy in the *café* of the Porte Maillot who was so smitten with J. J. Rousseau, and took care of him and served him with so marked a preference, without dreaming that his friend was an author and a philosopher. Alfred de Musset set great store by these spontaneous attachments, and often returned them by rendering real service to these good people and interesting himself in their affairs.

At the chess club and the Café de la Régence, he was keenly regretted. But the fondest and truest of his friends was his uncle Desherbiers. There was no sacrifice which this good man would not have made for his nephew. He was comrade and father in one. Alfred loved him with filial devotion, and neither could do without the other. On some points their opinions differed. In literature, politics, and philosophy, they did not always agree. At chess or piquet, they occasionally

quarrelled, and parted in dudgeon. But the next morning Alfred would write a note of apology; and in the evening they would meet, and make no allusion to the differences of the night before. Often, at the very instant when the letter of excuses was being despatched, the good uncle would arrive under the impression that it was he who had been in the wrong. They were like Henry IV. and D'Aubigné, whose tiffs and reconciliations, says Sully, were like those of a lover and his mistress. This impassioned friendship lasted as long as they lived.

In the address delivered at his reception by the Academy, Alfred de Musset said, "I have never quarrelled with any one but myself." A grudge was an impossibility to him. When literary differences had alienated him from the "Cénacle," and he felt that there was a coolness between Victor Hugo and himself, it was a real grief of mind to him. One day, in the spring of 1843, the two poets met at a breakfast at M. Guettinguer's. They came forward to greet each other with outstretched hands, and conversed as gaily as though they had parted only the evening before; and Alfred was so moved by his cordial welcome that he wrote the fine sonnet which has made the memory of it immortal, "Il faut dans ce bas monde aimer beaucoup de choses."

Among the ladies of Paris most distinguished for wit, elegance, beauty, and good taste, I could cite a score who gave him proof of sincere friendship. Those to whom he has addressed verses, and whom he has designated by their initials, — Mme. T., Mme. O., Mme. G., — are easily recognizable by people in society. Now

that Mme. Menessier Nodier has been named by the poet, there can be no harm in saying that the sonnet, "Je vous ai vue, enfant," and the two following ones, were composed for her. The *rondeau*, "Il est aisé de plaire à qui veut plaire," was addressed to the wife of a minister. But there are no verses in his collected poems addressed to one person whom I wish and ought to name. Mme. Ancelot was very fond of Alfred de Musset. Her support was of great use to him, when he was a candidate for the Academy, in the way of winning over M. Ancelot, and saying good things of him with that constant premeditation of which kindly women alone are capable. Moreover, he always spoke of her with gratitude and respect, and freely owned his obligations to her. Those who represent Alfred de Musset as prone to sarcasm and slander show that they had no real knowledge of him. He never slandered any one. He never sacrificed the absent to the pleasure of turning a witticism. He was even unwilling to listen to the slander of others, for fear of becoming accessory by the mere hearing. No one with the slightest regard for truth will refuse to believe that many of the ill-natured *bon-mots* which have been ascribed to him are due to those who pretend to have heard them from his lips, and take this course to gratify their private grudges. Whenever any one ventured to insult him to his face, Alfred de Musset showed a prompt and terrible power of repartee, but it never occurred to him to commence hostilities. Sometimes it was only upon reflection that he took the sense of an injurious remark, so hard was it for him to credit a malevolent intention.

Not only did he never make an unfair use of his intellectual superiority, but, in conversation, he put himself on a level with his interlocutors, as much through modesty as politeness; so that they left him as well satisfied with themselves as with him. This amenity did not prevent his maintaining his own opinion with entire frankness; but the attention which he paid to the views of other people, and the form of courtesy which he knew so well how to preserve, rendered discussion with him easy and interesting. It was a pleasure to differ from him. Few people have the courage of their opinions in the presence of men of authority; and the everlasting assent with which their remarks are received must be an exceedingly wearisome thing to princes. Alfred de Musset pleased them, because he ventured to express opinions contrary to theirs, and did it with as much tact as independence.

In the same manner, he liked to have people hold their own against himself. He liked them to defend their cause while they had a reason to give, or an argument to adduce, and especially he liked them to express their thoughts clearly. In his earliest years, he showed his antipathy for hesitation. One evening in 1828, our father took us both to the house of General Caux, at the war department, to listen to a eulogy on the late Duc de Rivière by M. Alissan de Chazet. The audience consisted of royalists, tried and true. Before we entered the minister's drawing-room, our father charged us to be careful not to wound the self-esteem of the author. M. Alissan de Chazet read his panegyric somewhat tamely; and, when he had finished, the admirers of the Duke

congratulated him. By way of showing that he was not intoxicated by the nectar of compliment, the author requested criticism. He even insisted upon it, remarking that this was the time to point out his faults before his MS. went to the printer. Alfred immediately spoke up, and said that he had a criticism to make. The company gathered around the little blond, who was entirely unknown, while our father knitted his brows in some anxiety. "Monsieur," said the lad, "in the piece which you have read to us, every time you make a comparison, or illustrate your thought by an image, you seem to ask the reader's pardon by saying, 'so to speak,' or 'if I may venture to say so.' Now I think that one should dare say things as he feels them, and I should advise you to suppress those rhetorical precautions. I prefer too great boldness to an appearance of timidity."

The assurance of the fair-haired boy was highly amusing to the company, and his strictures did not displease the panegyrist of M. de Rivière. Two years later, the critic published poems, against which no one could prefer the charge of timidity.

Yet, when circumstances required them, Musset did not despise "rhetorical precautions." At the house of the Duchesse de Castries, much frequented by the old Duc de Fitz-James, who was very fond of anecdotes of French character, and told them wonderfully well; at the godmother's, where fashion never excluded gayety; when visiting other women of the world, nay even in the *salon* of a prude, — Alfred had the art of saying things so as not to wound the most fastidious ears.

The fact that he never neglected the opportunity of

making a joke when one came in his way shows that there was a great fund of good-humor in the man. Yet his jests were always innocent, and had no end save that of amusement, for he detested mystifications. One evening Princess Belgiojoso, whose friendship for him was very sincere, had some sort of grievance against him. When the time came to take leave, the princess said with some severity that she owed him a grudge. He went home resolved to write a submissive letter and ask her pardon, and the first sheet of paper that he took up was a stamped one. He determined to use it, and accordingly composed a letter full of whimsical apologies, which he wound up by saying that the official sheet would attest the solemnity of his asseverations and the profundity of his repentance. The next time he saw the offended lady, she held out her hands, laughing so heartily that the other persons present were amazed at her welcome, and demanded an explanation of it, which was given.

Even among entirely congenial people, there are moments in the country, and in summer, when the time seems long. At such times, Alfred de Musset delighted in giving a new impulse to conversation. When he foresaw these hours of languor and weariness, his inventive mind had a thousand resources. One morning, in a certain *château*, the numerous guests had abandoned themselves to the *far niente*. The *châtelain* had thrown up his duties as proprietor; the men were reading the newspapers, or smoking on the outside steps: the need of some kind of diversion was universally felt. Some of the ladies took their work, and one sat down at the

piano and played a mazourka. Alfred thought that he detected a melancholy meaning in the first phrase of the air, and a gayer thought in the second, and he traced the same contradiction through all the developments of the theme. He said so to the lady at the piano, and illustrated the difference of sentiment which he had detected, by singing to the melody of the *ritornello*, —

"Alas! Alas!
What sorrow in the world!
Aha! Aha!
What pleasure here below!"

To show that she understood him, the lady sang it in her turn, and then asked for more words. "Come," she said, still playing, "give me two sad verses and two gay ones."

It was not easy, for the music required alternate lines of five and seven syllables; but the poet gave his mind to the task, although at that time he had never practised with Father Hermann. When the musician had sung a couplet, she went back to the *ritornello*, while the *improvvisatore* produced the succeeding couplet. He composed in this way as many as were wanted, all in the twofold mood indicated in the programme. It was a complete little poem in the form of a plaint, but I am no longer able to say what it was about. Here are two or three of the couplets, which by the merest chance I find in the depths of my memory, —

"I will carry my despair
To a foreign shore:
Italy, the ever fair,
I will see once more!

Now my lady-love is gone
From my longing view,
'Hither,' cries the dulcet tone
Of my hostess new.

Listen to a lover's woe,
Pity all my pain!
And, O bright-eyed maid, do thou
Fill my glass again!"

The reason why I remember these three couplets is that, all day long, the ladies whom the complaint amused kept singing them over and over, so that the whole castle resounded with the refrain of the mazourka,—"What sorrow in the world! What pleasure here below!" I offer them to the reader as a specimen of those relics in forgotten drawers, which the poet of the "December Night" calls the "*débris* of happier days."

Here is another such relic, which must be classed among the improvisations. Alfred de Musset, who could sing the grace and beauty even of a staircase at Versailles, was naturally yet more disposed to pay homage to these qualities when he met them in a woman. One evening there came to the godmother's a bewitching young lady who brought the mistress of the house a little present. It was a needle-case of black shell ornamented with silver. Alfred took it into his head to have this box himself. It was a mad enterprise. The godmother could not give him what had just been given her, and her young friend declared that the box was no longer hers to give. He was very obstinate, however, and returned to the charge again and again, but without success; and so the evening wore away until near

midnight. In the dressing-room, before going home, the young lady wrapped herself up in a white *capuchon*, marvellously becoming to her rosy complexion. Alfred said jestingly that she looked like a monk, and they parted. Early the next morning, our groom, who was well used to such errands, was traversing the streets of Paris, carrying a big envelope containing the following six-line stanzas: —

" Fairy friar in orders white,
Lo, a beggar starving quite!
Winsome friar with tints of rose,
Drop a trifle ere he goes:
Freely gives who gives aright,
Fairy friar in orders white.

Winsome friar with tints of rose,
All my hopes on thee repose!
Fairy friar in orders white,
Hopes deceive, — a saying trite:
Dare I then my suit disclose,
Winsome friar with tints of rose?

Fairy friar in orders white,
If I say the truth outright,
Winsome friar with tints of rose,
I invoke a world of foes:
How should I their wrath invite,
Fairy friar in orders white?

Winsome friar with tints of rose,
Evil elves their rest oppose,
Fairy friar in orders white,
Who have bidden thee, Good-night:
What's the reason? Tell, who knows,
Winsome friar with tints of rose!

Fairy friar in orders white,
When thy glance on me did light,
Winsome friar with tints of rose,
I became as one of those, —
I who use to snore at night,
Fairy friar in orders white.

Winsome friar with tints of rose,
Men propose, but gods dispose;
Fairy friar in orders white,
Proverbs tell the truth aright:
Listen, then, what I propose,
Winsome friar with tints of rose.

Fairy friar in orders white,
Give and take, — receive, requite, —
Winsome friar in tints of rose,
There's a bargain one may close:
'Tis our very case I cite,
Fairy friar in orders white.

Winsome friar with tints of rose,
Gavest thou the gift I chose,
Fairy friar in orders white, —
Ebon case with silver bright, —
I should pay thee, I suppose,
Winsome friar with tints of rose.

Fairy friar in orders white,
I should pay thee mite by mite,
Winsome friar with tints of rose,
All my verse and all my prose
Could devise of most polite,
Fairy friar in orders white.

Winsome friar with tints of rose,
Ne'er a virgin flower that blows,
Fairy friar in orders white,
Won such praise as I'd indite,

Tribute stately and verbose,
Winsome friar with tints of rose.

Naughty friar in orders white,
Say me nay, and in despite,
Naughty friar with tints of rose,
I'll beset thee with such woes
Thou shalt dearly rue thy plight,
Naughty friar in orders white.

Ah, my friar with tints of rose,
Holds my heart her secret close?
Ah, my friar in orders white,
I *would* tell it if I might! —
Nay; but why the tale expose?
Ah, my friar with tints of rose!"

Although young, the lady had already received a good many compliments, but seldom of this quality. This *impromptu*, written in haste between bedtime and the hour of rising, was a charming surprise for her; and she replied by sending the author a little sandal-wood box, containing not needles, but a pen, which afterwards achieved much writing, both in prose and verse. I could not tell the number of graceful tributes which the letter-post or the early groom has thus distributed over Paris, — how many flowers that lavish Muse scattered by the way-side. As for the long talks, now light, now serious, — but always poetical, original, and full of curious observations, — which used to detain us in the godmother's drawing-room till the small hours, they must be allowed to perish, with their occasions and the circumstances which suggested them, for lack of a paid stenographer who should give his days and nights to recording them in a folio.

This prodigality was not confined to things of the

mind. It was rooted in the very nature of the man. Rich or poor, he could only live *en grand seigneur*. If he gave his last five-franc piece to relieve some case of need, he did it as freely as though his pocket had been full. At Croisic, on the sea-side, he saw one day, before the hut of a poor salt-maker, a ragged little girl asleep in the sun with her head on a handful of straw. He drew near, and softly put a *louis d'or* between her lips, and then stole away on tiptoe, exulting in the trick, and in the pleasure which awaited the child when she should wake. I have read in the memoirs of Lord Byron, so sadly mutilated by Thomas Moore, that when the agents of the noble lord had sold his estate of Newstead, and wrote to him to ask what they should do with the proceeds of the sale, Byron replied, — "You need not trouble yourself to invest the money. I will use it for my pleasure." An enormous amount was in question, — some hundred thousand pounds sterling. Alfred de Musset was perfectly capable of making the same reply. He only needed to feel the touch of the two million and a half francs. In default of the domain of Newstead, we sold, in 1846, a small family property belonging to our father's inheritance. Alfred received one morning, as his share of the first payment, five thousand francs in silver money. He had never possessed so large a sum before. I advised him to put it in the funds; but he replied, looking admiringly at the little bags ranged along his table, — "What! change these beautiful coins into scraps of paper! I am not such a fool. It is not in the funds that I will put this money, but in my own closet."

He actually arranged the bags in a cupboard; and as though distrustful of himself, and willing to offer proof of his wisdom and prudence, he gave me the key to keep, saying that I might give it back to him mornings, but not evenings, in the perilous hours of dissipation and play.

I agreed, put the key in my pocket, and departed. In our dining-room, I met General de Berthois, one of our oldest friends, and went with him to the drawing-room. I had hardly sat down by the general's side, when I felt myself pulled by the sleeve of my coat. I turned round, and saw my brother, who was close behind me, and wore a grave and preoccupied air. He stooped, and whispered in my ear, — "The key! Give me the key!"

I gave it up, and never saw it again. That fine precautionary arrangement had lasted a little less than a minute. The five thousand francs were not invested in the funds. Alfred de Musset never held in his hands a receipt for rent or a railway bond. On this head, he would take no advice. Moreover, he was, in all respects, the most independent man alive; governed by impressions, and the fancy of the moment. He was for ever setting out with the intention of going to some particular place, and changing his purpose when half-way there. From the Quai Voltaire, where he lived in 1840, the distance was not great, by way of the Rue des Beaux Arts, to the office of the "Revue des Deux Mondes." One evening he was to dine there with some of his associates, and had accepted the invitation with pleasure. As he went downstairs, he asked who the guests were to be, and whom he was to sit next. There was one person whom he would like very well for a neighbor.

Would he have him? Such another one, he said, would bore him. Lerminier would perhaps turn the conversation upon politics. The talk would be all, — "discussion of the address," and "attitude of the ministry." At this notion, he took fright. He changed his course, and dined alone at the Palais Royal, whence he sent a messenger with a note of apology.

Engagements of any kind annoyed him; but none alarmed him so much as engagements to perform a given amount of work. All that he has said in his story of the "Lost Poet" he felt so bitterly, that I consider that period of his life one of more cruel trial and of greater peril than he ever encountered at any other time. And yet the poet who so dreaded the lightest bond allowed himself constantly to be entangled by enthusiasm, by weakness in the presence of importunity, by imprudence, and maladministration of his affairs. He gave his signature only too many times, and often to people less obliging than the manager of the "Revue." His self-styled friends occasioned him more than one sleepless night.

All characters abound in contradictions. When Musset consented to have a housekeeper to manage his bachelor establishment, he told her that he should not keep her three months; but she stayed with him as long as he lived. Scarcely was he installed in his rooms on the Rue Mont Thabor, and still in debt for his furniture, when there was offered him a fine copy by Carle Vanloo of a Giorgione in the Louvre, — "Le Concert Champêtre." The picture was not dear, and the opportunity was precious. He took it on a four months' credit, brought

it home in triumph, and hung it on his dining-room wall, saying to his housekeeper, who was by no means delighted with the acquisition, — "Put my plate opposite that picture, and take one dish off my bill of fare. I shall always like my dinner well enough."

The Duchesse de Castries twice wished him to marry. The person whom she selected first was a very fine woman ; but Alfred was then much too young and showed little zeal in the matter. The second *parti* pleased him immensely ; but he was brave enough to surmount his inclinations, and to raise objections which were found just and reasonable. Once again, — I do not know in what year, — Chenevard said to him carelessly, between two games of chess, —

"If, by chance, you should want a wife, come to me. I can point one out who will suit you."

"With all my heart," said Alfred. "Who is she?"

"I have lately," replied Chenevard, "become acquainted with M. Mélesville. This morning I called there, and was shown into the drawing-room. A most charming young girl invited me to sit down until her father should come. I had never seen her before, and I was smitten with her beauty and her pleasing and intelligent air. She is a brunette with large black eyes. Her father is the best man alive. They are a family of intellect and taste. It occurred to me at once that she would be an excellent match for you, and I resolved that I would mention it. There is my proposition. You can think it over."

They discussed the matter as they sat, and to such good purpose that the two arrived at a fixed intention of

marriage. Alfred was particularly fond of large black eyes and brunette beauties. He had had but little intercourse with M. Mélesville since the days of our stay at Auteuil; but that little had been friendly and based upon mutual esteem. He remembered having seen this young girl play a part with great spirit in a little society comedy, and he knew that she was full of talent and perfectly well bred. His poet's imagination instantly took fire. Chenevard, in whom he had confidence, reiterated that M. Mélesville was the best and simplest-hearted man in the world, with patriarchal manners, who owed his own fortune to his own talent, and would be sure to rate talent above wealth. One would like to marry just for the sake of having such a father-in-law. All possible advantages seemed to be united, and it only remained to decide what steps to take. Alfred, already devoured by impatience, sought a pretext for renewing his acquaintance with M. Mélesville and calling at the house; since he would hardly be believed if he said that he was in love with the young lady without knowing her, and he did not wish to plunge like a notary directly into the question of figures. Chenevard soon found the wished-for excuse. "You will go," he said, "to M. Mélesville, and propose to co-operate with him about a play. It will not be hard for you to think out the plot of a comedy. Armed with this plot, you will introduce yourself: you will work with the father; you will chat with the daughter. When you have had time to discover her wit and her graces, you will appoint me your ambassador. I shall be the bearer of proposals. They will be favorably received, and you will make a regular comic-opera marriage."

Alfred was enchanted with the project, and immediately adopted it. The subject which he thought of for his drama was the Arabian tale of the magnanimous Noureddin, which he proposed to weave into a comic opera. Mlle. Mélesville's name was Laure, and she had an album of drawings. Chenevard, who also was full of dreams about the projected marriage, thought he would offer the maiden a pencil-sketch. He took his subject from Petrarch's sonnets, and represented the first meeting between the great poet and Laura de Noves, giving the features of Petrarch and Laura some resemblance to those of Alfred de Musset and Mlle. de Mélesville. When the sketch was finished, he employed the suitor to add to it a French translation of the four lines which had suggested its subject. Alfred, accordingly, wrote underneath the drawing the following quatrain imitated from the twelfth sonnet of Petrarch, —

> " Bénis soient le moment, et l'heure, et la journée,
> Et le temps et les lieux, et le mois de l'année,
> Et la place chérie où dans mon triste cœur
> Pénétra de ses yeux la charmante douceur ! " [1]

This done, Chenevard proceeded to M. Mélesville's in the character of a scout, to reconnoitre the ground, and offer his drawing enriched by an autograph. At the first mention of the young girl's name, he was informed that she was promised to M. Vander Vleet, and that the marriage would soon take place. Thus ended the little intrigue. Alfred did not renounce it without regret.

[1] " Blessed be the moment, the hour, the day, the season, the place, the month of the year, and the beloved spot where the charming sweetness of her eyes penetrated my sorrowful heart."

Serious folk may smile at so very slight an outline of a romance; but I cannot help thinking that, if the scheme had been successful, the poet might have been living now. Once brought under the omnipotent influence of a beautiful and clever woman whom he loved, and who was worthy of his love, Alfred would have been the truest, happiest, and most correct of husbands. He had a reverence for plighted faith, and his independent spirit could have been made perfectly to conform to duties in whose performance lay the security for his happiness. A congenial marriage would have saved him.

Years and experience had no power to chill the heart of Alfred de Musset. On the contrary, his susceptibilities continued to grow keener as long as he lived. He was a prey to agitations, anxieties, and perpetual emotion. He felt an incessant need of free and confidential communication, either with his brother or his uncle Desherbiers. He detained us by his fireside, and we could no more resolve to tear ourselves away than he could suffer us to go. When he was in one of his feverish moods, one had to enter into all his feelings, and become dubious, dejected, wrathful, and tender by turns. This violent spiritual exercise, these contradictory emotions of a soul singularly sensitive and mobile, were sometimes fatiguing to those about him; but there blended with such fatigue an indescribable charm. Passion and exaggeration are contagious. We were carried away in spite of ourselves, — tormented, exalted! And we came back again and again, as to an indulgence from which we could not refrain, to be tormented and exalted anew. Who will give me back that agitated

life,—those hours of delicious anguish? Ah, well!—for forty years at least, I revelled in the intimate knowledge of that great mind, and the riches of that sincere affection.

It is said that there are geniuses who do not know that they are such. I do not believe it. Correggio himself, simple-hearted as he was, did not long remain in that state of ignorance. Alfred de Musset, the most modest of poets, knew better than any one else the strength and weakness of each of his own works, and he judged them as soundly as if they had been another's. Those of his writings which he rated highest are the second volume of poems, the "Fils du Titien," "Lorenzaccio," and "Carmoisine."

It is to be regretted that, in France, poetical gifts cannot be a source of fortune. The "Caprice" alone was worth more to the author in money than all his other works put together. Stendhal, who was very fond of Alfred de Musset, amused himself one day with computing how much Alfred's poetry brought him by the line. He took the number of the "Revue" which contained "Rolla," and the result of their calculations was the modest sum of sixty centimes. Stendhal then opened the poems of Lord Byron, and taking for a point of comparison "Tasso's Lament," for which Mr. Murray payed three hundred guineas, he found that the English publisher had given his author more than a guinea and a half a line. Stendhal exclaimed upon the difference as scandalous and disgraceful to France.

"But, before you fly into a rage," said Alfred, "you had better consider whether there is not a correspond-

ing difference in the quality of Lord Byron's verses and mine. Perhaps they paid me enough."

"I will never allow that," replied Stendhal.

If Lord Byron, with his well-known character, had not been a peer of England; but if, instead, he had been no richer than the French poet, and had received but five hundred francs for his poems where he did receive five thousand, — life would have been impossible to him upon such conditions.

As he said himself in his lines to Mme. Ristori, Alfred de Musset had a heart ever prompt to answer the appeal of genius. We know the immortal homage which he paid to M. de Lamartine. He also admired Béranger, but could not understand why a gifted poet should voluntarily restrict himself to the narrow limits of the song. He blamed him for having weighted himself with the often painful shackles of a refrain, and for having dragged about his whole life long the ball of the *faridondaine*.[1] But he was not one of those who have excused themselves from doing justice to the noble character of Béranger by calling his disinterestedness coquetry.

It was not by accident that the author of the "Pensées de Raphael" spoke of Shakspeare and Racine meeting upon the table. He professed an equal admiration for these two so diverse geniuses. In the fervor of youth, he preferred the former; but ripe reflection taught him the full value of the second. When he found in Racine a strong and impassioned expression, he ex-

[1] Say the "ding-dong bell;" any merely sonorous and unmeaning burden. — Tr.

claimed that it was as fine as Shakspeare; and if he found, in the English poet, a great thought clothed in a pure and irreproachable form, he compared it to the poetry of Racine. One of the things which he liked best was a certain exclamation of Phedra's, which illustrates by its very grotesqueness the bewilderment of one sick at heart, —

> "Ariane, ma sœur! de quel amour blessée,
> Vous mourûtes aux bords où vous fûtes laissée?" [1]

When Rachel breathed out that strange and unlooked-for lament, Alfred buried his face in his hands pale with emotion.

I will not say that naturalness was the quality which charmed him most: but, rather, that it was for him an indispensable quality; and if its presence could not save a book from being mediocre, or even bad, no conceivable beauty could atone for its absence. For this reason the letters of Mme. de Sévigné did not please him. He detected in them at times a something artificial and affected, — a suspicion that they would be shown to other persons beside her to whom they were addressed.

The abuse of adjectives, upon which he had animadverted so comically in his letters from Ferté sous Jouarre, continued to be one of his pet antipathies. One day in 1833, a beautiful romance — of which all the world was talking, and which contained a new revelation of genius — fell into his hands before he had made the acquaintance of the author. He enjoyed the book, but found things

[1] "O! my sister Ariadne, by what love wounded didst thou die on the shore where thou wast abandoned?"

in it to criticise. Struck with its abuse of adjectives, he took a pencil and erased as he read, all the useless epithets, parasitic clauses, and other superfluities. The first chapter of the novel thus chastened and corrected, is infinitely more natural and pleasanter to read than the original, and the reading of it conveys an excellent lesson.[1]

In none of his works either in prose or verse, not even in his critical articles, did Alfred de Musset ever employ the first person plural. This manner of speaking, which is supposed to be modest, seemed to him, on the contrary, pretentious. Except in newspapers, where the writer who wields the pen may be considered as expressing the views of the other editors along with his own, he never liked any one to say *we* in place of *I*, and when he encountered that hackneyed idiom, he would say laughingly, — "I did not know before that the author was king of France and Navarre."

The poet of "Namouna," and the "Spanish Tales," often smiled at the futile attempts of his copyists, for never was poetry more imitated than his. "The rash creatures do not know," he used to say, "how much good-sense one needs in order to dispense with common-sense. But good-sense, tact, wit, and imagination are all in vain, if one have not especially and above all a great deal of heart. Fancy is the most perilous of all marks of talent. The ablest are led astray by it like school-boys, if they make it a matter of the head alone. Those who feel truly and keenly may give themselves up to the dangerous delight of letting their thought run

1 I still possess this curious copy of "Indiana." — P. M.

wild, knowing that the heart will follow it step by step. But people who lack heart are invariably swamped by their fancy, if they have any. Once launched on their voyage, they can anchor to nothing, because they have no fixed point in their own souls."

Up to his latest day, Alfred de Musset read all that appeared, and wanted to know and appreciate all. He paused, well pleased, over a new idea, however trivial. His memory retained a pleasing verse, a passage containing a just sentiment, an ingenious reflection, or an original expression ; and, caring little whether the author had a reputation or no, he quoted freely what struck him as unusual. He suspected books made out of other books, and preferred himself to apply at the original sources of information rather than trust to interpretations.

But I see that I am being carried away beyond the proper limits of my subject. If I were to collect the literary judgments and opinions of Alfred de Musset on the men and things of this and previous ages, I should have to make another book. It is time to pause, in spite of the recollections which come crowding into my mind. May it but seem to the passionate admirers of the poet that I have attained the end proposed, — that of making the man known. To them alone is this notice dedicated. I have written with no other purpose than the desire to be exact, with no guide save my regrets, with no *fixed point in my soul* save my love for the brother whose untimely death has left a void in my life which nothing can fill.

THE END.

Molière
Petrarch
Racine
Tasso
Jean Jaques
Rousseau